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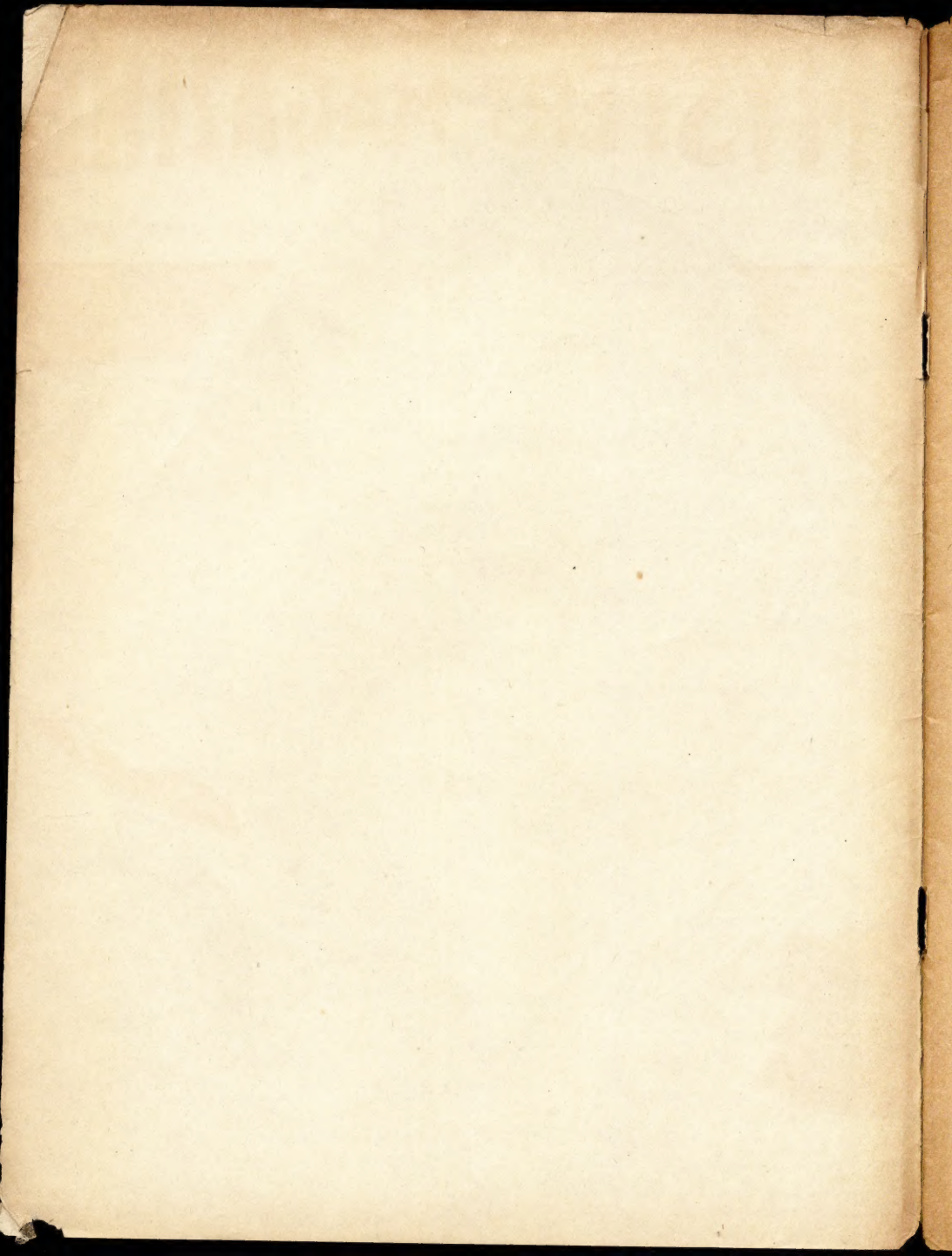
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FEATURE
DETECTIVE
STORY
THE

VELVET TOUCH

BY JULIAN DARROW



No. 63 will contain "THE CLUE OF THE RED LAMP," by Charles Fulton Oursler.

MYSTERY MAGAZINE

Vol. III.

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TAKE NOTICE

Any future number of this magazine may be delayed by the difficulty of getting paper. BUT IT WILL SURELY BE OUT. Watch the newsstands, in case a delay occurs.

THE PUBLISHER.

THE VELVET TOUCH

By JULIAN DARROW

CHAPTER ONE

TO OBLIGE JERROLD

AT five minutes to three Carruthers stepped into the outer office of his legal friend, Jerrold, and nodded familiarly to young, clear-eyed Thad Buxton, who had looked up from his law book and smiled at him.

Heavy-set Jerrold was found with his feet on top of a flat desk, a favorite attitude when smoking his big pipe, and cogitating.

"Have a chair, A. B. C.," he said in his beaming way;

"and light up. I've got a case I'd like you to take hold of, just to oblige me."

Carruthers, having to bear the name of A. Bruce, was often addressed in this abbreviated fashion by his intimates. He followed no profession, being a man of means; but somehow a gift for solving riddles urged him to dip into puzzling cases of crime that had the community guessing; and Jerrold really believed him to be another Sherlock Holmes.

"Luckily I happen to be killing time," Carruthers observed, composedly; "so let's hear what it's all about."

"One of my clients has been pestered, and I told him I'd

fetch you around to his apartments to-morrow morning to see what you could do about it. You know of the map, I'm sure—no other than Mr. Maxwell Darwin."

"The Wall Street Little Napoleon of Finance," observed the caller, quickly; "and bold splurger in oil stocks. Got a big property down in Mexico, I understand, that's giving him trouble."

"Just so, and he's received several threatening notes," explained Jerrold; "besides, he's gone down himself three separate times to settle strikes, and vows he'll not risk his life that way again. He has a manager there now handling the latest mutiny, and who has hired strike-breakers. These notes never come through the mails, but are found in his rooms."

"An old trick with blackmailers, meant to show the intended victim how easily he can be reached. It means there's some inside work being done. Has he any one in his employ, Jerrold?"

"Only a Jap valet, Artura Matsuke, whom he says he would trust with his very life," came the answer.

"Very good, but we must remember that just now, with America in the World War, we read of stories connecting Japanese with Carranza and Germany against our country. Has this Artura ever been down in Mexico?"

"Yes, Mr. Darwin sent him down once, and he was gone several months," Jerrold replied, watching his companion's face keenly; "but he accomplished his mission in an admirable fashion, I understand."

"And is that all you have to tell me, Hector, because I happen to have an engagement for half-past three that antedated your call?"

"Yes, I only wanted to get your consent to at least see Mr. Darwin and then decide whether you'd care to handle his difficulty. It may seem only an ordinary blackmailing case just now, A. B. C.; but somehow I feel it in my bones that other extremely interesting developments are bound to crop out, such as might make it well worth your while."

"Oh! I'll take it up all right, Hector, never fear," smiled Carruthers, rising as the lawyer reached for his ponderous pipe; "I've always wanted to know that iceberg of a plunger at close range, and this will give me my opportunity. I'll be around then to-morrow morning at eight in my roadster, and we'll go to his apartments."

"At the Rivington—really a family apartment-house; but Darwin tired of being in a bachelor building. He has Artura phone for his breakfast, and it arrives by the time he has had his bath. As a rule he dines out, save when he chooses to have friends drop in, when the dinner is served by Delmonico, regardless of expense. I'll look for you then in the morning, A. B. C. So-long!"

It was Artura who admitted them to the sumptuous apartment of the millionaire oil speculator when they arrived along about half-past eight on the following day. Carruthers saw that the little Jap valet was possessed of the calm, inscrutable face so common to the Oriental. He simply put him down as well worth watching, and then devoted himself to Mr. Darwin himself, whom they discovered just finishing his breakfast.

"My friend Jerrold here," remarked Carruthers, after the introductions were over, and Artura despatched on an outside errand that would take him away for possibly half an hour, "has been telling me something of your difficulty, Mr. Darwin; and if you think I can help you please let me know the particulars."

"Thank you very much, Carruthers," the other replied; "fortunately I preserved the third and last note, found pinned to that easy-chair yonder yesterday morning. Take a look at it and see what you think the game may be."

Before doing so A. B. C. stepped into the adjoining room

and seemed to run a hand over the back of the chair in question. If he found anything he failed to state the fact to the others when he dropped into his seat again.

The note was written in what any one could see was an assumed hand, with a studied attempt to make it appear the work of an uneducated person.

"MISTER DARWIN: Sepor, this is third warning you have receive from us. Ther is limit to our paterce—unless you agree to just demands of yure employes and pay living wage you will regret same when two late. Ten thous. dols. you must deviler to us wich same sir is only to releve present distres among yure hard work slaves—this sum you must han over in cash to gentlemen who call for same and giv name of Doctor Francisco De Luna—same is represent Mexico in Nu York here and he is absolute ignorant of why money is place in his hands excep that it is for benefit of employes. He will only call when you ask him come over the wire—address in telephone book. Wages be increase twenty-five per cent you agree. Yure every movement is watch—treachery be reward lik lightning from cloud. Be warn then respected sir—what is much money to dead man. We hav honor sign ourself

"THE COMMITTEE."

Carruthers laughed as though really amused.

"The same old blackmailing scheme, sir," he observed; "an itching palm, and their interest in your employes a mere secondary consideration. You pay the peon laborers a living wage, I assume, Mr. Darwin?"

"As high as any in Mexico, sir," came the snappy response. "I'm going to win this strike first, and then, if the humor seizes me, I may do all sorts of fine things to make life more endurable for my workers, even to installing a motion picture theater at the mines for their enjoyment."

"I'll keep this note, with your permission, Mr. Darwin," said Carruthers; "now, since this seems to be something along the order of an inside job, tell me about your valet—is Artura trustworthy?"

"Absolutely, sir!" came the decided answer. "Of course, the maid who has charge of this floor has a pass-key, and can enter my apartment at will."

"Give me her name, please; I may later on wish to interview her."

"Amelia Bowers, and she seems dependable, I must say," answered the oil king. "Then there's the janitor, O'Gorman, who has a wife and family on the top floor. He certainly has an honest face, as well as a good reputation."

"Be very candid with me, Mr. Darwin," continued the detective. "Is there any one else who might be able to enter here at will?"

"Not unless they summoned Artura first," came the reply; and then, as the sound of the electric bell came to their ears, Carruthers noted that a pleased look shot athwart the face of Darwin, while he hurriedly arose, saying:

"Since Artura is out I shall have to answer in person."

"H'm! apparently knows who is at the door at this early hour," muttered the observing Jerrold, stretching his fat neck in order to peep; and immediately uttering an ejaculation of intense surprise. "Why, it's a pretty little flower girl with a basket of posies on her arm; and she's fastening a boutonniere to the lapel of Darwin's coat, while he looks down and chats with her. Now, that's what I call mighty queer, I must say!"

"Explain yourself, Hector, do you know that little girl?" snapped Carruthers, himself looking closely at the absorbing panorama at the outer door of the apartment.

"Never saw her before in my life," spluttered the big lawyer; "but I'll take my affidavit it was her picture my

young clerk Thad accidentally handed me with a sheaf of letters taken from his inside pocket. The photo was taken at Luna Park down Coney Island way. That kid out there with the happy, innocent smile on her pretty face is Thad's girl, for a cookey; but how comes it Mr. Darwin feels such a deep interest in the child?"

"Perhaps he may think it worth while to tell us," suggested Carruthers, for now he's coming back, still smiling as if the very sight of Jeannette or Camille, whatever her name may be, had made him happy."

Darwin must have noticed their inquiring looks, for he immediately remarked: "Dora comes every morning with my boutonniere, for I have the reputation of never appearing on 'Change without one. The little girl interested me from the first day she shyly offered me flowers on Forty-second Street. I don't know just why, for I've seen other flower-girls even prettier. She is an unusually sweet and innocent child. But it would be as absurd to suspect an angel from heaven as Dora Lee."

"Surely, Mr. Darwin," said Carruthers quickly, and then adding: "By the way, would you mind telling me who the handsome lady is; for somehow I seem to have noticed her face before," and he pointed to a photograph that stood on a silver stand close by.

Mr. Darwin shot a keen look at A. B. C. and appeared immensely amused.

"Ah! yes, a very good friend of mine, Mr. Carruthers," he said; "at least she claims to be, and when as charming a woman as the Princess Isolde Dagominskoff declares that somehow the ordinary man feels immensely flattered. She is a genuine Russian princess, too, there is every reason to believe, who luckily managed to escape out of that beastly country before the big smash under Lenin and Trotzky came about; saving her precious family jewels in the bargain. Oh, yes, you're wondering now whether this interesting lady has ever been here in my apartment; I must tell you that once I invited a party of clever artists and theatrical folks to lunch with me, and look over my curios, and the princess was of the number. That is the sole occasion, I assure you."

"I imagine I must have seen her at some function," Carruthers went on to say, still observing the photograph for future emergencies; "a wonderfully attractive woman, and doubtless as clever as she is handsome, Mr. Darwin?"

"You have described her to a dot, sir," said the oil king; and thereupon he proceeded to dilate at length upon his association with the beautiful Russian, explaining how he found her a fascinating creature well worthy of study, although he professed to be too confirmed an old bachelor to allow himself to dream of such folly as "falling in love."

Some ten minutes later, to Jerrold's surprise, Carruthers got up as if to leave.

"Perhaps," suggested Mr. Darwin, also rising, "you might not object to telling me whether you think you have picked up any clue from what I've confided to you?"

"I'd rather not commit myself as yet," laughed the other.

When the oil king shook hands with his visitors at the door he did not look altogether sanguine, from which Jerrold imagined the shrewd manipulator of the petroleum market had not been much encouraged by the interview.

CHAPTER TWO

THE MAN WITH THE BLACK BAG

ON the way to the elevator Carruthers asked a question. "Did you happen to notice the dark-faced chap talking with the elevator boy when we arrived, and who hurried away as if to avoid being recognized?"

"I saw there was a man turning aside," admitted the lawyer; "but whether he looked like a Swede, an Italian, or an Irishman, is more than I can say."

"Well, he was swarthy, and may have been a Mexican," explained the other; "a fact of considerable importance to us just now. I may be able to learn something from the elevator boy. As to the princess, I chance to be acquainted with a party who would quickly discover if the handsome Isolde is any sort of Old World adventuress. He's made that fact a particular study for years, and is a recognized authority on the subject. I'll drop in on Geoff and interview him."

The coming of the elevator cage prevented further conversation, but on the way down Carruthers questioned the half-grown colored attendant.

"Who was that dark-faced party I saw you talking to, George, when we came in?"

"I reckon as how I don't know his name, boss," came the hesitating reply, and from the manner of the attendant Carruthers suspected an uneasy conscience.

"What was his business in the Rivington, then, if he doesn't live here?"

"He done key' askin' fool questions, and a-pokin' out de smokes right 'long, suh. I do believ I got five in my vest pocket, and dey smell right fine to me, dey does for a fack, suh!" and he exhibited a row of weeds as he said this.

"Here's a quarter, George, for a smoke," Carruthers remarked, plucking a cigar from the other's vest pocket as he spoke; "I'd like to try the brand, as they all seem to be of the same type, and have the odor of pure Havana."

When Carruthers and Jerrold passed out below the former, instead of heading directly for his car standing at the curb, drew the portly lawyer to one side, to where they could be sheltered by the pillars marking the entrance to another apartment house.

"Look who's coming out of the Rivington," whispered Carruthers, and Jerrold uttered a little cry of astonishment when he recognized one of the pair as the faithful Artura, who was supposed to be well on his way to carry out his errand.

"Don't move yet," hissed Carruthers, "there's another party coming out of the Rivington, who must have been in the elevator with Artura."

The heavy veiled lady passed them as though unconscious of their presence; when a little fugitive gust of wind caused her face to be seen, Jerrold uttered a gasp.

"Recognized her then, did you, Hector?" chuckled Carruthers blandly.

"The Princess Isolde for a fact," gurgled Jerrold; "new, do you suppose she's gone and taken up her quarters there so as to be closer to her intended victim?"

"Possibly," calmly admitted the other; "she's the guest of some lady who fancies she can break into the upper crust by having a live Russian princess stopping with her."

Jerrold rubbed his hands together breezily as he went on to say:

"Things are moving, it seems, A. B. C. Now that crafty Jap wouldn't have lingered around only he suspected our coming so early this morning might spell danger to his little game. And milady of the diamond eardrops, and the dazzling eyes that have evidently bewitched old Darwin—she must be up to some mischief for a certainty."

"I'll take you around the corner in the car and leave you for a short time, as I have an errand close by," remarked Carruthers.

"Let's see, is it in connection with that dark-faced party?" demanded Jerrold.

"Cleverly put, my boy," laughed the other. "Fact is,

I'm curious to learn just where this weed came from, and as I noticed a tobacconist sign close by I'll have a look in there."

Three minutes afterwards Carruthers entered the cigar store in question.

"I had this smoke from a friend of mine," he remarked, offering the cigar in question for inspection, "and I'd like to duplicate it. I have an idea he purchased it at your place."

"Very likely," replied the manager, after a glance at the band about the Havana, and then raising the cigar to his nose to take a "whiff," as only a real connoisseur might do. "We have them in stock—twenty-five straight. I've had quite a run on that brand lately; sold half a dozen to a gentleman within the hour."

"Gentleman a rather short man, dark complexion, dressed in light suit, and wearing shabby Panama hat with a rather gay band around it—does that fit his description, sir? Ah! you nod as if agreeing with me. That was my friend, sir; you do not happen to know him, I suppose?"

"Not by name, sir," replied the manager affably, "but he's been in here several times before. I imagined he must be some kind of a foreigner, for I heard him say a single word that I took for Spanish."

"I see," chuckled Carruthers, "you are observing of your good customers; but you are correct; my friend is from Mexico. Unfortunately," he went on, as he laid three cigars aside and continued feeling others as if meaning to add to the pile, "I neglected to ask my friend his present address, and likely enough I shall have some trouble about locating him. If he should drop in again would you mind asking him to leave his card with you for Mr. Percival Towers?"

"Glad enough to do it, sir, and be of some assistance in the matter," the manager hastened to say. "I know he'll be in again without fail, to claim the bag he left in my charge. By the way, sir, unless I'm mistaken there's an old tag attached to the handle that might have a decipherable address on it."

He ducked under the counter and reappeared with the article in question. It was a rather battered black leather bag, and seemed quite heavy. Carruthers noted these facts with growing interest. Perhaps he guessed it might hold some species of infernal machine which, providing Darwin proved stubborn, and the worst came about, could be surreptitiously introduced into his apartment, when a well-regulated clockwork arrangement would do the rest.

On examining the tag he found that a name and address had originally been written there, but it was only possible to decipher the latter, which turned out to be a street in an obscure part of the great city.

Having jotted this down in his note-book he thanked the manager, and paying for six excellent smokes, left the shop, satisfied that his time had not been entirely wasted.

Instead of hunting up Jerrold, A. B. C. went straight to the Rivington. George displayed signs of uneasiness at sight of the detective, as though his conscience told him what had brought the other back again.

"I 'spect I knows what youse is wantin' to ask me, suh," he immediately observed, with a leer, "an' right now I tells yuh I done turn him down flat-footed. De other boy los' his place 'cause he let a strange man go up, and dere was two 'partments broke into. I jes' coaxed him along till de supply o' seegars dey run out, an' den I says no! jes' like dat."

"But did he ask questions about any of your people, George?" Carruthers demanded.

"He done run his finger along de names o' de folks heah till he comes to dat o' Mistah Darwin. He asks me if de

gemmon was home nights, an' I tells him it happen sometimes dat away; but if he wanted to see anybody he'd hab to sen' up his heard. Don't reckon de likes o' him kerries sech things along; but I got my smokes jes' de same, suh, an' turn him down flat."

Satisfied with what he had learned Carruthers now hastened to rejoin Jerrold, whom he found in a fever of expectation and curiosity. He soon explained all that he had just learned, and which naturally pleased the other very much.

"I'm only bothered about that chit of a flower girl," Jerrold grumbled; "because I'm positive Thad is deeply smitten with her pretty face and winsome ways."

"Dismiss any fears of her from your mind," Carruthers told him. "Dora, I am positive, has had absolutely nothing to do with those threatening notes; still we may find she is connected in some fashion with Mr. Darwin's past life, though as yet he can't seem to solve the puzzle of her face. But I'll drop you at your office and see you this evening, same old rendezvous and time, to report further progress in our new case."

It was around ten that same morning when Carruthers drew up before a fine bachelor apartment house, the same in fact where Mr. Darwin had had his luxurious home before going to the Rivington. When he knocked at a certain door a loud voice called out:

"Walk right in; my man is off on an errand, and I'm laid up with a devilish attack of gout!"

At sight of Carruthers Lieutenant Geoff Walpole looked pleased; he even attempted to rise from his easy-chair, only to subside with a groan.

"Never thought I'd come to this, Carruthers," he complained. "But it's nice to see you again after such a long interval. What are you digging at these summer days—up to your old fad of prying into dark and dismal mysteries, I wager, such as baffle solving at the hands of any ordinary investigator. Have you visited me just to pick up a clue?"

"Partly that, old friend, though I've been meaning to drop in this long while. Sorry to find you in this bad shape; too much high living in your salad days, while you were abroad as naval attaché, and hobnobbing with kings and lords in the capitals of Europe!"

"Sit down, man, and talk to me, can't you? Throw the papers off that chair. Everything in a mess while I'm laid up in this beastly way, and half the time Gaspard off on some errand. Now, what can I do for you, A. B. C.?"

"I'll get straight to the point, Lieut. Geoff. I want to glance over your fascinating albums of notorious persons who have troubled the peace of high-born families in Europe during the last thirty years; the collection of photographs and printed scraps that I once dipped into, and promised myself the pleasure of examining closely some fine day. That time has cropped up now, for I am interested in a certain party who, I have reason to believe, must appear in your complete roster of those who practiced the velvet touch!"

CHAPTER THREE

ECHOES FROM THE PAST

THE ex-naval attaché attempted to rise, but sank back with a grunt as his gouty foot gave him a stab. So Carruthers, upon being posted, managed to drag the dusty twin volumes out of their hiding-place, and was soon scanning their pages.

"When you drop in to pay me a more extended visit,

A. B. C.," remarked Lieut. Geoff, "I'll explain just who all those celebrities are. It's a rare collection of scheming humanity, and I doubt if there is its equal extant. Ah! you seem to have struck something already."

Carruthers nodded his head and held up the volume, upon which the other chuckled as if greatly amused.

"Wonderful woman that!" he exclaimed; "without doubt the smartest adventuress known to Europe in two generations. Don't believe her equal has existed either in reality or romance since the notorious Becky Sharpe paraded through the pages of Thackeray's 'Vanity Fair.' Know her, do you, Carruthers?"

"Changed considerable," replied the other, "but one could never forget that beautiful face. You'll be interested in learning she's here in little old New York and playing her game as of yore, breaking men's hearts and pilfering their pockets. Tell me more about her, please."

"Turn the page and read the articles about her pasted on the back," directed the man in the easy-chair. "She cut a wide swathe in Paris, London, Berlin, Madrid, Vienna, and, would you believe me, even as far away as Hong Kong, Tokio, as well as down in Mexico City, where she was well known and wielded considerable influence with men in high places. But under what name does she sail these modern days, if it's permissible to ask, A. B. C.?"

So Carruthers explained a little, while Lieut. Geoff laughed until he forgot all his stabbing pains, and the tears actually coursed down his bronzed cheeks.

"To be sure," he remarked, "what else would you expect when that same accomplished lady could so utterly deceive the folks over at Scotland Yard that the king and queen received her as worthy of association, when she posed as the English widow of some wealthy East Indian potentate?"

Carruthers scanned the clippings and made a few notes. "Thanks awfully, old friend," he went on to say; "I may later on wish to borrow this book for a special purpose, if you don't object. Did you ever run across the lady personally?"

"Only once, and then under most peculiar conditions," replied the retired officer, meditatively. "It was in Spain, at Barcelona, and she appeared in a rôle entirely different from her usual one of vampire woman. In fact, she seemed to have been inspired with a spasm of revolutionary fever, for I saw her actually leading an armed force of anarchists who held possession of the old Spanish city for twenty-four hours."

"Amazing!" ejaculated Carruthers, in evident admiration; "her talents are indeed varied. What a history she must have by now; and still as fascinating as ever. About her playing the part of a confidence queen in the City of Mexico—there's no doubt about that, you believe?"

"None whatever, Carruthers. I had my information from a party who was the poorer by a lump sum through investing in some wildcat oil company she persuaded him to embark in. She had many influential friends down there."

Carruthers thereupon told him something of Darwin's difficulties, at which Lieut. Geoff rubbed his hands together, while a grim smile broke over his face, tanned by years of exposure—at golf, and kindred sports, rather than the salty air of the Seven Seas.

Afterwards Carruthers said good-by, promising to spend a whole evening with his afflicted friend before long. He dined at a favorite restaurant, chatted with some friends he met, and along about three decided to look up the address he had managed to decipher on the black bag of the

mysterious foreigner who was trying so urgently to gain an interview with Mr. Darwin.

Donning some old clothes so as to render himself less conspicuous he sallied out, and soon found himself in one of the foreign sections. This was an old game with Carruthers; fond of studying humanity, he had often haunted such places as the push-cart markets, where amidst the chatter of many tongues he could amuse himself by the hour.

Tenements surrounded him, with jabbering Italians, Greeks, Syrians and in fact representatives of a dozen nationalities on every side. Children by droves were playing in the dirty streets. Carruthers knew enough to keep clear of this riff-raff.

He had managed to make out the house of his number. Like so many others in that crowded district it was a tall, grimy appearing tenement. He wandered past it at intervals until nearly an hour had slipped by. Then his attention was attracted to the figure of a young girl. She stood on the elevated stoop of the tenement he had under observation, and seemed to be eagerly watching a wrangling mob of boys and girls near by.

The girl in question was about sixteen or seventeen, he judged. Like the generality of those around she was garbed in soiled and torn garments; he also noted that her face, while evidently pretty, was anything but clean.

Carruthers just then had no eye for the picturesque effect of torn clothes and battered shoes much too large for diminutive feet; it was the face that held his attention. He rubbed his eyes and looked again.

"Am I dreaming?" he asked himself, "or can there really exist two persons so much alike? Face, figure, action itself, she is Dora, the little flower-girl to the life! But how impossible it seems. On the stage an accomplished Mary Pickford might successfully play a double rôle like this, but hardly in real life, unless I've run across a marvel. Why should Dora appear up there to Darwin at the exclusive Rivington as the sweet flower girl, and then come back to her existence in the slums, with her ragged clothes, gaping shoes, and grime like stove blacking marking her face in streaks?"

So he stood and wondered and gazed to his heart's content, filled with an indefinite suspicion that after all this might have to do with the conspiracy against Darwin, since the girl evidently belonged in the same tenement that sheltered the mysterious foreigner he was trying to look up.

"How Jerrold will gasp when I tell him about it; and how I'd like to fetch young Thad here just to see what the eyes of love could accomplish in ferreting out the truth."

Muttering in this way he managed to move a bit closer to the stoop. The girl had noticed his steady gaze and was giving him a critical survey. Carruthers discovered that her eyes were flashing, as well as big and black; so were Dora's for that matter, although at the time he saw them fairly melting with modesty and childish delight.

He lingered near, the girl meanwhile shooting an aggressive glance that way occasionally. She did not withdraw, although the appearance of several irate women on the scene had caused a break in the ranks of the squabbling children, with several of the ringleaders carried off by the scruff of the neck, so that comparative peace reigned again.

Presently Carruthers witnessed a little scene up on that stoop that enlisted his interest far more than might commonly have been the case. A man had issued from the tenement and stood just back of the girl. He was dark of face, and undoubtedly a foreigner. He paid no heed to the

rough horse-play of the urchins in the street, but watched the girl eagerly, as though smitten with her charms.

Presently the man addressed her, and seemed to be pouring out his soul in some sort of protestation, while the girl mocked him. Carruthers noted that her voice was no longer low and modest, as when he heard it in Darwin's apartment, but sounded shrill. A woman in a window above began to call "Mag" again and again, from which fact Carruthers fancied the girl on the stoop must bear that humble name in this neighborhood.

All at once something happened that thrilled the watcher. The foreigner had attempted to take hold of the girl, but was rewarded with a resounding slap on his cheek; at the same time the agile girl slipped past into the grimy-looking hall, her selfish shrieks of laughter floating out long after she had vanished from view.

The man looked furious and glared around him as though ready to pick a quarrel with any one whom he thought had been watching his defeat; so Carruthers wisely turned his eyes in another quarter. When he glanced around again two figures occupied the same stoop, one being the angry wooer, and the other a woman wearing a veil.

Thrilled with a sudden suspicion Carruthers continued to watch. The pair seemed to be talking volubly, and once he heard the man utter an angry word which sounded to him like a Spanish expletive, so that he believed he could reasonably set the other down as a Mexican.

That suspicion growing stronger, A. B. C. sauntered down the slovenly street and waited to see what happened. The pair talked on the stoop for something like ten minutes, and then the woman hurriedly left. Carruthers again noting her fine carriage, although unable to see her face, felt more certain than ever.

Just as he anticipated would be the case, around the corner she entered a waiting taxi. Discovering another of the same kind passing he managed to bribe the chauffeur to take him for a fare, and promised double pay if the other vehicle could be followed uptown.

As he conjectured would be the case, the chase led him directly to the Rivington, where the veiled lady vanished from his view. But Carruthers never settled with a driver in a more cheerful frame of mind than on that occasion. "I guessed as much," he was telling himself, "and so that one point is settled. I fancy I'm a shade closer to my goal; but with such a clever quarry in view nothing must be taken for granted until I'm ready to draw the net. She's evidently paying that foreigner for some purpose; but what Dora Lee has to do with the game is a mystery up to now. But step by step I'll follow my clues, until they bring me to some sort of climax."

CHAPTER FOUR

GATHERING THE THREADS

LATER that same afternoon Carruthers again appeared on the street. Once more he was himself, which meant the gentleman from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot; and to stamp this with undeniable approval he carried his favorite stick, which, like some others of his possessions, had its own little history.

Before evening had set in he paid another visit to the old naval attaché and begged the loan of the scrap-book containing the picture of the handsome adventuress, as well as accounts of some of her most daring Continental exploits.

"I'll loan it willingly, Carruthers," said Lieut. Geoff, "but only on condition that some evening you try and fetch Mr. Darwin over to see me. From all I've heard about him I fancy we might become rather congenial, since he has seen quite a few world-wide adventures in his day."

"Agreed," the other told him. "I'll take good care of this book, believe me, Lieut. Geoff. You can guess what my object is in borrowing it, of course?"

"H'm! I suspect you mean to give Mr. Darwin a chance to escape from the spider's web he's already floundering in, by showing him a picture of his fascinating Russian princess as she was some years ago, when she kept all Europe, and some other parts of the fashionable world as well, in a turmoil."

"You've guessed it," laughed A. B. C., "and I'll come to see you before long, to spin a fresh yarn that may amuse you."

So he again headed for home, and along about seventy-three called up the Rivington. The calm, even tones of Artura answered him over the wire. Yes, his master was at home, but engaged; and unless it was something especially important he would not care to disturb him just then.

"This is very necessary, Artura, so please tell him Mr. Carruthers would like to speak with him," A. B. C. shot out.

"It shall be as honorable gentleman say," the ever-respectful Japanese valet assured him; and a minute later Darwin himself called:

"Hello! Mr. Carruthers, what can I do for you? Have you found out anything worth while; and when may I expect a report?"

"If you don't positively forbid me, sir, I'd like to run over right now and leave something with you that is of the greatest importance. May I come? I have a dinner engagement at a quarter after eight, or I wouldn't press you."

"Come right along, Carruthers. You'll find me at home entertaining a few select friends," and before A. B. C. could speak again the connection was broken.

Twenty minutes afterwards and Artura ushered him into the outer room of the luxurious apartment, where a light burned low. Beyond lay the library, and after that he fancied there must be a dining-room. It happened that when Artura went to whisper to his master he either purposely or carelessly left both doors open behind him, and Carruthers took advantage of this fact to use his eyes.

He could see a table that was spread with glittering cut-glass and delicate china. Around it glided several waiters from some famous caterer's establishment, serving the guests. At the further end sat Maxwell Darwin; Carruthers also saw the back of another gentleman, while two ladies in evening dress sat on either side of the proud and genial host.

One face alone riveted his gaze, and this was without doubt that of the Russian princess Isolda. When Darwin excused himself and came toward the connecting door, Carruthers noted how her eyes followed him, as though some slight suspicion might have been aroused. But at least the millionaire had the good sense to close both doors after him. Then Carruthers found himself shaking hands with the Little Napoleon of Wall Street.

"At your service, Mr. Carruthers," said the other, when he found that Artura had discreetly retired; "I am entertaining, you may have noticed—really paying off a lost wager. Have you any news for me?"

"I've thought it a part of my duty, Mr. Darwin, to sound a warning. Possibly you may not thank me; but I hope first you'll hear what I have to say, and also take a

look at this volume I've fetched along with me, borrowed from an old friend."

With that Carruthers opened the book and disclosed the picture of Madame de Barry, as she had once been known, just as beautiful as the original at that moment seated at Darwin's table.

Darwin glanced at the pictured face, and then seemed to read some of the headings above the clipped articles; after which he looked up smiling.

"Thank you for your trouble, Carruthers," he said quietly. "This clears the air of any doubts I may have harbored. I strongly suspected it before, ever since I found that her mastery of the Russian language was far from perfect; you see I once spent several years in the oil fields there, though I've never betrayed the fact to her. Still, she is wonderfully fascinating, and well worth studying. I may allow things to drift along for a while. It pleases my whim, though naturally somewhat of a drain on my pocketbook. But she is received in exclusive society circles, so that I am not taking any extraordinary risk of being cut dead when the explosion comes off."

"I ought to inform you, sir, that there is even a chance that the lady is connected with the blackmailing gang," and thereupon Carruthers sketched what he had heard of her Barcelona exploit, as well as her doings in the Mexican capital and the late visit to that marked tenement in the slum district of New York.

"You thrill me, Carruthers," said the millionaire. "Kindly leave this volume with me a short time; I'll see that it is returned safely. As you say a most dangerous woman, and yet never did there live a more captivating one since those historical days of Anthony and Cleopatra in Egypt."

Knowing that he was keeping the other from his guests Carruthers thereupon said good-night, and was shown out by the courteous Artura, coming at his master's summons. As A. B. C. was leaving the apartment house he passed some one entering, and it gave him a little thrill to recognize the same dark-faced foreigner whose black bag he had seen at the tobacconist's shop. Yes, he clutched the same tightly in one hand now; and really his manner looked very suspicious to Carruthers, though prejudice may have had something to do with that, he admitted to himself.

Seeing the man boldly pressing the button to summon the elevator boy, he concluded that the keen-witted Artura could be trusted to take care of him. Accordingly, he entered his waiting taxi, and was soon at the rendezvous, one of the Broadway restaurants where, amidst soft music and a cabaret show, the fashionable are wont to dine.

Jerrold was on hand, looking expectant. While they gave their order Carruthers would not unbosom himself, but later on, after they could talk softly without being overheard, he sketched his exciting operations of the afternoon and evening. In this fashion did Jerrold hear about Carruthers carrying the wonderful scrap book with its incriminating evidence straight to Darwin, and what use he anticipated the millionaire might intend making of his ammunition.

"How about your first suspicion concerning the sly Artura, A. B. C.?" demanded the stout lawyer presently.

"Nothing doing in that quarter, I'm firmly convinced by now," the other assured him.

"But didn't he stick around to watch us, and hear things?" asked Jerrold weakly.

"Perfectly natural that he should be devoted to the interests of his employer," Carruthers informed him. "We looked a bit suspicious in Artura's eyes, and he wanted

to make sure we were to be trusted. So dismiss him from your thoughts, Hector."

"Yes, and the charming lady—how about her?" continued the other.

"I'm not so certain of my ground there," admitted A. B. C., rubbing his chin reflectively as he spoke; "because there happen to be a number of suspicious circumstances connected with her actions that I have not as yet been able to explain away. Her having a host of friends down in the Mexican capital in itself looks like positive proof that she might be connected with this blackmailing scheme, as a side issue. Still, in the end it is likely to prove that this wonderful woman has been playing her own little game of the velvet touch, without any connection along the line of the coarser scheme to get at Darwin's millions."

Jerrold was fain to agree with him, as he nearly always did, and then begged to hear more, for he seemed to divine that the other must have looked up the mysterious foreigner who owned the black bag. Accordingly, Carruthers described his visit to the slums, and what he saw there.

When he reached the scene of "Mag's" appearance, it was comical to witness the way Jerrold's mouth opened and his eyes distended.

"It's absolutely beyond belief, unless I could see it with my own eyes, A. B. C.!" he fumed, and the other immediately took occasion to say:

"I mean you shall, and to-morrow some time, just as soon as I arrange my little programme."

"If ever innocence and purity looked out through a little girl's eyes," Jerrold went on to say vehemently, old bachelor that he was, "it certainly did in that photograph of Thad's girl; and here you're trying to tell me she's only a clever piece of baggage, a brat of the slums, full of wickedness perhaps. I think that for once you must be dreaming, A. B. C."

"Wait and see," chuckled the other grimly. "The resemblance would even puzzle the eyes of an ardent lover. In fact, I mean to have you coax Thad around there at a certain hour and make the test."

"Now that wouldn't be such a bad idea," agreed the lawyer, smiling broadly.

"Call it two then, sharp, to-morrow. If you arrive a little ahead of time hang around until the very second. I have my reasons for asking this."

They continued to chat as they enjoyed their dinner, though Jerrold found it difficult to keep his mind away from the engrossing subject connected with what might be taking place up in the apartments of the millionaire.

Later on they separated, each having engagements; but it was with a promise of fresh developments on the ensuing day, when they would keep their tryst down in the tenement region where the grand climax was apparently slated to be staged.

CHAPTER FIVE

CARRUTHERS SHOWS HIS HAND

JERROLD had evidently timed his appearance on the scene with excellent results, for a clock in the neighboring church was just striking two on the following afternoon when, with Thad Buxton in tow, he swung into the open area before the marked tenement.

"Thad, help me out, will you?" he was saying nervously at the time; "your eyes are younger than mine, and, be-

sides, I'm beginning to think I'd better consult an optician about glasses. I'm looking for Number Thirty-seven."

"There you are, sir!" announced the young fellow, with a touch of boyish triumph in his tones; "that tumble-down old rookery across the street is the place you want. I'm wondering what it has to do with the aristocratic Mrs. Hollingsworth's divorce case you're working on so hard. I'd hate to spend a night under that same roof. Why, it's fairly swarming with kids and all sorts of foreign-looking people."

Jerrold did not answer him. Truth to tell, he had just made a discovery that actually took his breath away. A girl had come out of the tenement door, and started to descend from the stoop to the street. Jerrold saw her face, and no longer wondered that Carruthers had been sorely perplexed. True, the streaks of stove-black might be missing just then, but all the other distinguishing marks as mentioned by the detective were present, even to the old shabby and torn dress, and rather unkempt hair, and the shoes, plainly several sizes too large, and gaping horribly at the toes.

Jerrold could hardly believe his eyes, but there stood the girl looking up toward a window of the second story, where a slovenly woman leaned half-way out, and scolded as well as threatened all manner of dire punishments unless the messenger sent forth on some errand hurried her steps.

When Jerrold felt his young companion give a violent start he knew full well what had happened. Thad was staring as in a dream, his eyes glued upon that elfish figure with the ragged shawl thrown over her shoulders. It was certainly a tableau, and if Carruthers were hovering close by, as Jerrold felt positive must be the case, doubtless he would be observing all that passed with considerable interest.

Most of the entertainment had been cleverly planned by the master of ceremonies; but after all it was a streak of accident that brought a new line of action which Carruthers, with all his foresight, could hardly have anticipated. Who should come along just then but the identical dark-faced foreigner, the same man A. B. C. had set down as a Mexican, and who seemed to be associated with Darwin's Russian princess. No sooner did he discover the girl standing there with her back toward him than he made a move as though intending to cut off all chance of flight on her part.

Jerrold, of course, quickly guessed his identity when he witnessed this. If the fat lawyer could have expressed himself coherently at that thrilling moment, doubtless he might have been muttering to himself with ecstasy:

"Gee! The plot thickens as if on the stage in a melodrama, now that the heavy villain has appeared on the scene, with the young hero hard by, his heart torn with jealousy and doubts!"

Indeed, things began to happen with celerity from that moment; but considering what tragic elements were gathering for the final climax, it could hardly have been otherwise. Mag turned after sending back a shrill and saucy reply to the threats of the huge female in the window above—turned to find the grinning face of her ardent, if also detested, admirer close to her own, and to feel his eager fingers clutching her wrist.

"Let go of me, you big pig!" she screamed, striking violently at him with her free hand in a way that told of considerable Tartar spirit.

Some of the dirty-faced children playing near by set up whoops, and hastened to rush toward the spot; for everything that partook of the nature of excitement was to be considered in the light of a picnic by them.

Thad got into action about that time, before the slow-witted Jerrold could even dream of trying to hold back the youngster. Stunned as Thad had at first been upon recognizing his adorable Dora, though in a most astounding guise to be sure, and under the strangest of conditions, still, the sight of her thus struggling in the arms of a ruffian she appeared to detest, and who seemed bent on taking toll from her lips despite the punishment he might receive from those flying nails—all this spurred Thad to action.

Jerrold uttered a gasp of dismay when he found himself too late with that detaining hand. All he could do was to waddle after the impetuous one, and hope for the best. It was with a glad heart, therefore, that just then he glimpsed Carruthers running forward, as though meaning to have a hand in the affair that had already gone beyond the bounds he had set.

Thrusting the shrilling youngsters aside without any regard for their feelings, Thad quickly reached the spot. Mag was still clawing desperately at the exposed face of her persecutor when Thad pounced upon the man and struck with all his concentrated indignation. The blow was delivered amidst a chorus of shrill shrieks of appreciation, showing where the sympathies of the crowd of ragged kids lay.

The man, upon finding himself attacked, hastily released his struggling prize, though Mag did manage to get in one parting scratch down his left cheek, as though to make her favors impartial. He had staggered back under the impetus of the smart blow delivered at short range by the law clerk, but, rendered furious by the jeers of the lookers-on, gave evidence of reaching in his pocket, possibly for a handy knife, the alarmed Jerrold greatly feared.

Thad was equal to the occasion, however. Not waiting to give the wretch any leeway, he jumped forward again and struck several more powerful blows. Loud cries began to arise on all sides by this time; women screaming angrily at the man, many of the children also crowding close upon him as though to add to his confusion. He doubtless realized just then that he was a bit unpopular with the masses; so that it might not be healthy for him to attempt further violence. The young hero of the occasion, the defender of innocence, was evidently the idol of the crowd, and he posing as the villain had better make himself scarce while the going was good.

He gave Thad a black look that boded ill for the boy should fortune ever put it in his power to turn the tables, and then slunk away, vanishing in some convenient area-way with which he was doubtless familiar.

Thad whirled on the girl, who, still panting from her exertions, was surveying him curiously. Jerrold, hovering near by, held his breath while waiting to ascertain how "Mag" would take it when the indignant Thad began to pour out his hot reproaches. And Carruthers, too, pressed in through the outer fringe of the jostling crowd, so that he might not lose any part of the stirring little drama being enacted there in front of Number Thirty-seven.

"Say, young feller, you're no slouch when it comes to usin' your dukes, let me tell you!" burst from the lips of the girl; at which Jerrold stared harder than ever, while Thad boiled over with incredulity and indignation.

"What do you mean by masquerading like this down here in this foreign settlement?" the youngster demanded hoarsely, as soon as he could catch his breath.

"What! Me? Say, I live here, don't you know, kid?" the girl told him, at the same time flitting a hand backward toward the reeking tenement, every window of which by now had at least one occupant.

"But—I don't understand!" Thad went on saying, floundering desperately, as one beyond his depth always must; and he was groping at that minute, if any one ever did. "Why, nonsense, you never lived here in your life—it's all some silly joke! Do you think I haven't eyes to know you anywhere, no matter how you tried to disguise yourself? Come away from here with me, Dora; this is no fit place for the girl who has promised to marry me, I tell you!"

The girl's turn to stare in bewilderment had come.

"Whatever are you a-saying, young feller?" she demanded in amazement. "Why, I ain't no skirt of yours, that's right. I ain't never seen you before now, honest to goodness I ain't! Who do you take me for, I'd like to know; and, say, did you just now call me—Dora?"

There was a sudden fierce emphasis upon that last word, as though it meant much to the speaker. Even Jerrold noticed this, and as a rule he was notorious for missing things that counted, even though lawyer that he was.

"Have done with this nonsense, I tell you!" said Thad, showing signs of irritation, for doubtless he had begun to suspect he was being made a butt of ridicule by the object of his affection; "you can't deceive me by saying you live here, when I've often been at your home with the florist. Dora, please stop this foolishness and come away with me."

"You're sure plumb crazy," said the slum girl, continuing to chew vigorously at her wax, and surveying her champion with a half frown; "why, these people here c'n tell youse I'm just Mag Fisher, and that I belongs to old Ma Dugan up there in that window, shakin' her flat at me right now fur makin' all this here row. But you say it again, kid, and I'm still askin' you—Dora what?"

"Why, Dora Lee, of course; you know that as well as I do!" Thad almost shouted in his excitement and irritation.

The girl shook her head sadly. The light of eager anticipation died from her sallow-black eyes, and she looked greatly disappointed.

"Tain't her, then," she muttered in deepening regret, "cause her name'd be Fisher too, Dora Fisher. But, say, kid, you done me a good turn, and I'd like to even things up if I could. I ain't your skirt, honest I ain't. Mebbe I do look like her, which I'd be right sorry to know. I'm just plain Mag, an' I ain't got any book learnin' to speak of, 'cause Ma Dugan won't let me go to school; I gotta stick home, an' slave fur her an' the ole man. But say, you sure gives me a pain when you calls me Dora. Want to know why; all right, then, I'll tell you."

Just before she said this any one who had been watching Caruthers might have seen him hold up his handkerchief as though making a signal. A taxi had threaded its way through the outskirts of the crowd, and brought up close by. From its interior two persons emerged, one of them a middle-aged woman, and the other a pretty and daintily-dressed young girl.

The latter must ere this have heard and seen something of what was transpiring in front of the grim-looking tenement building, for she immediately flew toward the spot.

"Marjorie! Marjorie!" she was crying at the top of her voice as she came running, her dainty shoes splashing through the mud of that grimy street, her hands eagerly extended, and the light of a great happiness stamped on her face.

The slum girl who had called herself "Mag" seemed almost petrified with many conflicting emotions as she beheld this charming little figure breezing toward her,

calling out the name she herself had possibly not heard for so long it was almost forgotten.

Then the spell was broken. She brushed the almost petrified Thad aside as though he did not count in the least, and in another moment the two sisters, as alike in face and figure as two peas in a pod, were clasped in one another's arms, regardless of the havoc contact with Mag's slovenly attire must cause in the ladylike garments of the newcomer.

CHAPTER SIX

THE LAST WORD

"YOU sly rascal," Jerrold was saying to his friend Caruthers, at the same time beaming with happiness because of the wonderful outcome of the little drama. "You fixed it up so that Mrs. Lee and her adopted daughter Dora should hit this spot at exactly ten minutes after two, didn't you? And say, are they really twin sisters, tell me? However did you get on to the racket, and have they been separated for years? Is this a modern version of the 'Two Orphans,' transferred from Paris to New York? You're in for a bunch of explanations."

"You'll get it all in good time," snapped A. B. C. "Look who's coming now!"

"Glory be! If it isn't my client, Maxwell Darwin, with his faithful henchman and valet, Artura, trailing along at his side. Now what under heaven could fetch him here, unless this is also a part of your game. I remember him saying he felt queer every time he looked at little Dora; I wonder if he's going to discover something right now!"

Darwin advanced, all nervous excitement, his eyes glued on the pretty picture of the two girls still embracing and kissing. He quickly reached them, at which Dora drew herself from the arms of the slum girl, seemingly surprised to discover her wealthy patron standing there with that strange look on his face.

"Tell me," he demanded, with an attempt at mastering his emotions, "are you really twin sisters, and is your name Dora Fisher and not Lee?"

The flower girl looked around, and even smiled a trifle at Thad, standing there with relief stamped on his eager face.

"Yes, that is the truth, Mr. Darwin," Dora acknowledged; "I was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Lee, who keep a flower shop just off the Bowery. They found me as a small child wandering in the streets. I had lost my sister, and have never stopped looking for Marjorie; but although it seems we have been living less than a mile apart, we never met until just now. Oh, we are so happy, sir, to find each other again! I had begun to believe my sister was dead."

"But how did you come to be alone in this great city, you two children?" continued Darwin, as he looked down most affectionately at the twins.

"Oh! It always makes me shudder whenever I think of that dreadful time," Dora told him. "You see, sir, our mother had died suddenly, and we were sent to the city to live with a distant relative, whose name was on a slip of paper which we lost, and I never could remember it afterwards. So we wandered about for two days, sleeping in doorways, and always trying to keep away from the police, for we were afraid they would arrest us. Then came a terrible storm, and somehow we became separated."

"Mr. Lee found me crying bitterly, and took me home."

They searched everywhere, and even advertised after they had concluded to adopt me in place of the child who had been taken from them; but never a trace of my Marjorie was found. I can understand now, for she fell into the hands of some woman down in this terrible place. But why do you want to know all this, Mr. Darwin; is it anything to you, sir, that my name was Fisher, and not really Lee, and that I have a twin sister named Marjorie?"

Maxwell Darwin smiled and cast a look full of gratitude toward A. B. C.

"I shall never be able to repay you for this pleasure, Mr. Carruthers," he went on to say warmly. "When you came to me this morning to ask personal questions about my past life, which I admit I thought almost unmanly and bold, I never suspected that you were planning to give me such a delightful surprise. I came here as you requested, and, believe me, I would not have missed this meeting for a fortune."

Turning around to Dora, he continued, his voice faltering:

"My child, I am your own uncle, it happens. Your poor mother was my sister Julia. If you had been older I am sure you must have known that her maiden name was Darwin. I learned that she had twin daughters; try as I might I could never get a trace of what had become of them all; the world seemed to have swallowed them up. And so my joy at this unexpected meeting is almost without bounds."

Jerrold's round and rubicund face was a study just then. It beamed with absolute rapture as his eyes turned upon the companion of his plotting. Never had A. B. C. appeared more of a wizard than at that moment in the estimation of the fat lawyer.

Maxwell Darwin had a hand of each of the wondering girls clasped in his; he was wise enough not to press his new relationship further by any demonstration of affection that might dismay the sisters. One there was, however, who did not seem to share the general hilarity such a discovery might be expected to bring in its train. This was young Thad Buxton.

He had heard the astounding statement made by Mr. Darwin, and understood how a marvelous change had occurred in the fortunes of the modest little flower girl whom he loved with all his heart and soul. Why, it was just like so many of the delightful uplifting plays he and Dora had been accustomed to watching unfold on the screen, when she allowed him to take her to the movies. But a dreadful fear clutched at the honest heart of Thad. Now that the Good Fairy had come and turned everything she touched into gold, how about the sacred relations existing between them? Would this great old millionaire consent to his niece continuing her engagement with so humble an individual as a poor lawyer's clerk?

Thad stood there, never moving. He was proud, and nothing could make him take the first step towards solving this problem.

Jerrold saw him looking so forlorn, and his big heart felt a wave of pity for the woe-begone lad. It happened that the lawyer caught the eye of Dora just then, and obeying an impulse that did him credit, he made a quick movement of his thumb toward Thad. She intuitively understood, and freeing herself from her new-found uncle's hand, the girl darted over and threw both arms about Thad's neck, looking up in his face with her eyes as bright as stars.

"Oh, Thad!" she cried. "Is it all real, or am I dreaming? But no matter, if my uncle wants me he has got to accept you in the bargain. I would not give you up for all

the money on earth. You believe that, don't you, dear Thad? You'll love me just the same even if I don't have to peddle flowers after this?" It was almost pathetic to hear her appealing like this, and simple old Jerrold found himself winking rapidly, and clearing his throat in a suspicious way. As for Thad, the gloomy look on his young face vanished like magic, and he speedily enfolded the willing Dora in his stout young arms, a procedure that elicited a chorus of encouraging cries from the youngsters around.

"Kiss her, why don't you?" one bold slum girl shrieked, being doubtless well up to the regulation ethics of the movie drama; and, behold, Thad immediately took the hint, greatly to the delight of the approving crowd, which greeted the procedure with uproarious applause.

Mr. Darwin did not wholly approve of such an exhibition.

"Come," he said at this juncture, "suppose we adjourn to less public quarters, where all necessary explanations can be indulged in; for I take it there will be a thousand questions to be asked and answered. Artura, see if you can scare up another taxi somewhere, and if Marjorie will consent to accompany her sister and this lady, who I take it is Mrs. Lee, we will go to her house as the most handy, and make all arrangements for a new start in life for you two girls."

Somehow it would seem as though even the mention of her real name, after hearing nothing but "Mag" for years, had had a remarkable effect upon the girl of the slums. The fierceness had entirely died out of her face, and her eyes no longer sparkled with boldness; indeed, they were more like the lovely orbs of Dora, softened by the newly aroused affection for her twin.

She looked around with a fine touch of scorn on her face. There could be nothing in that squalid neighborhood to appeal to her, where her life had been one of drudgery and torment, mingled perhaps with occasional yearnings for better things, as memory took her back to those younger years before the mother died and the home was broken up.

Artura performed his task in record time, and into each taxi some of them were bundled by the happy Mr. Darwin. The crowd had become dense, and gave a great shout as the vehicles started away, especially when Mag leaned out and waved her hand derisively up at the staring woman in the second-story window, who she realized had slapped her face for the last time.

Once at the humble home of the florist and they settled down to getting better acquainted, while the good woman carried Mag off to the bathroom to transform her into a second Dora by judicious use of the other twin's extra clothing.

They were a merry party for the next hour or so. No mention was made as yet concerning what must be undertaken in connection with giving both girls the refining educational advantages that they would require as the nieces and heirs of Maxwell Darwin; that could be arranged later on, when all of them had become better acquainted to the new relationship.

Other things indeed occupied the attention of Carruthers, now that he had seen this little side issue brought to a happy conclusion. While they were waiting for the girls to come down, Maxwell Darwin turned his twinkling eyes upon A. B. C., and of his own accord introduced the subject of the fascinating Princess Isolde.

"I had no chance to tell you this morning, Mr. Carruthers, when you called on me, seeking information, but after you left my place last night I laid a little trap for a very charming lady to trip into. She seemed dis-

turbed when I made a second excuse to leave the dinner table, but Artura came and whispered in my ear that a certain man who had written me an urgent letter was waiting in my library to show me a working model of a wonderful invention calculated to bring about a cheapening of fuel for motor purposes. That is my one pet hobby, you may not know; and I would quit the society of kings to further the great ambition I have to make two blades of grass spring up where but one grew before."

"Pardon me, Mr. Darwin," said Carruthers, while Jerrold listened eagerly. "Am I mistaken, or was his working model contained in an old black bag?"

"I see you are wise to more facts than I imagined, Mr. Carruthers," the oil king replied. "What you say is true. I believe Signor La Motte, for he is an Italian inventor, has discovered the secret I've been looking for so long. Yes, he carried the model in a black bag, though keeping an essential part of it in his pocket, without which the machine would be useless."

"That explains how he was willing to leave the heavy bag overnight with the tobaccoist, where I handled it," remarked Carruthers, mainly for the benefit of Jerrold.

"After the signor had left me," continued Darwin, "I placed your album where it was likely to attract the attention of the princess, who I assumed would have the ordinary curiosity with which her sex is credited. The trick worked to a charm, Carruthers; for later on, while I was at one end of the library showing Major Burbridge and his wife some curios that interested them greatly, I could see out of the tail of my eye that the charming Isolde was deeply immersed in the contents of the album. Of course, she understood my scheme, and realized that her game was up, after noting how I had purposely turned down the page where her picture was pasted. She was reserved after that, and when saying good-night gave me a defiant look as I pressed her shapely hand. I imagine I have seen the last of the lady and her plotting to handle some of my money, for which I am both glad and sorry. She is wonderfully good company, if only you are able to forget that uneasy sensation that makes you feel as though sitting on a volcano that is liable to erupt at any moment."

So it turned out, as Carruthers afterwards learned. The Princess Dagominskoff vanished between days from New York, without even the formality of saying farewell to numerous fashionable friends she had made in high society. Doubtless under a freshly assumed name she is at present carrying on her bold exploits in some other metropolis where the "pickings" seem good, and credulous women, as well as admiring men, can be brought under the sway of her wonderful charms.

"But see here, Carruthers," the oil king went on to say an hour later, when about to take his departure, "while these happenings have taken on a delightful phase, and I shall never cease being grateful on account of what you have managed to bring about, nevertheless they do not carry us any closer to those silly threatening notes, unless after all the Princess was responsible for them."

"I think I can solve that little mystery, sir," said A. B. C. calmly, "if you and Jerrold here care to accompany me for half an hour or so."

To this proposition both the others eagerly agreed, and so they bundled into the waiting car of the millionaire.

"Are you heading for the Rivington?" asked Darwin presently.

"Nowhere else, sir," came the enigmatical reply.

Once they were inside the big apartment house he condescended to take them further into his confidence.

"When I examined that easy-chair to which you said, sir, the last note had been found attached, I discovered this black-headed pin still fastened to the tapestry material with which it is covered. Of course, I knew there was not one chance in ten that any man would carry such a pin back of the lapel of his coat; and so I felt firmly convinced I would eventually find the guilty person wearing skirts. Then I asked questions to discover who would be apt to have free access to your apartment during Artura's absence. Mr. Darwin, would you oblige me by ringing for the maid—I believe you said her name was Amelia Bowers?"

Darwin raised his eyebrows in a look of mingled admiration and surprise; while old Jerrold fairly hugged himself with joy, because things had all come out so nicely, and again his implicit faith in the wonderful ability of A. B. C. to solve dense riddles seemed to be so amply justified.

When the woman came and saw these grave-looking gentlemen surveying her with frowns she realized that the game was up, especially when Carruthers, sternly holding her eye, demanded that she confess just who bribed her to place those several notes in Mr. Darwin's apartment. Though at first she tried to act brazenly about it, she speedily broke down when her nerve failed her, and sought a woman's inevitable refuge in a flood of tears; and after wildly begging them to show her mercy, as she had a sick husband and a lame child at home in need of certain comforts, she confessed everything.

In this way then they learned just who the rascals were back of the blackmailing plot, men who after all really had no connection with the strikers down near Tampico and its great oil fields. They were later on arrested before they could take the alarm and flee, receiving a full measure of the punishment the law metes out to those who pursue the demeaning and hazardous rôle of endeavoring to exact tribute from people through means of blackmail.

Carruthers and Jerrold were glad to know some time afterwards that the strike in Darwin's oil holdings having been settled amicably, the big king of the market was busily engaged upon his extensive plans for the improvement in living conditions among the laborers, such as he had mentioned to them when declaring his inflexible purpose to win the fight.

As to Dora and Marjorie, both have been making rapid progress along the line of procuring an education that might fit them for the place their dotting uncle means them to occupy as his nieces, and expected heirs. Thad, too, has made quite a hit with the old speculator, and Jerrold soon lost his aspiring clerk, since the boy was tempted to enter Darwin's counting-rooms, where a splendid opening awaited him. No doubt in due time he and the pretty former flower girl will unite their fortunes, since they seem to be just as devoted to one another as when looking hopefully forward, as the peak of their ambition, to sharing in common a humble flat in some cheerless side street, so long as they were together.

Artura still serves his excellent master as of yore, and also wears that inscrutable smile that once worried Carruthers because of its serving as a mask to hide the feelings within. And Jerrold, the same big-hearted boyish fellow as of old, continues to look upon his friend A. B. C. as the last word along the line of Conan Doyle methods for investigating and solving mysterious episodes connected with crime.

A SEAT IN THE ORCHESTRA

By J. R. WARD

DETECTIVE MCINTYRE, from Headquarters, strolled unceremoniously into the outer office of the Equitable Purchasing Company, and thrusting aside a clerk, who endeavored to stop him and ask the usual questions in regard to his business, etc., made his way to the private office of the president of the company, Robert W. Oberlein, and without the formality of a knock, opened the door, strode in and slammed the door behind him.

Oberlein's greeting was warm and effusive. His sharp eyes, peering through horn-rimmed spectacles, lighted with pleasure when he saw the detective.

"Hello, Mack," he said, offering his hand. "Right on the job, eh? Don't lose a second, do you?"

The detective threw himself lazily into the most comfortable chair in the sumptuously furnished office.

"Nope," said he easily. "Can't lose a minute in this business, Bob. Got to keep going and grab trails when they're hot. Got to keep busy."

The other grinned as he regarded the slouching figure of his friend, one of his legs thrown over an arm of his chair. McIntyre was not exactly the picture of ambition at that moment.

"Want to smoke?" asked Oberlein, passing a box of perfectos.

"Does a fish like to swim?" grinned McIntyre, selecting one at random and chewing the end off.

"What's up?" he questioned as he lighted his weed.

The other drummed upon his desk with the tips of his fingers. "A very unfortunate thing has occurred and—"

"I know—I know," cut in the detective, wagging his head knowingly. "Everything I'm mixed up in is unfortunate. That's why I'm here. I'm a hungry hound looking for unfortunate occurrences. What's the trouble? Lose some money?"

The other nodded in the affirmative.

"How much?" asked the detective.

Oberlein shook his head sadly. "I don't know just how much. The bookkeepers are figuring it out now. I think it was about three thousand dollars."

"Whew!" exclaimed the man from headquarters. "How did you lose it?"

"It was stolen last night."

"From where?"

"Out of the safe."

"Safe cracked, was it?"

"No," replied Oberlein. "Somebody worked the combination, pried open the money drawer, and after taking the money, carefully put the drawer back in its place, shut the inside sheet-steel door, and left the outer door open on a crack. There were a good many valuable papers and books in the safe also, but these were not disturbed."

"What kind of a safe have you got?" queried McIntyre.

"Absolutely modern in every way," was the reply. "It couldn't have been opened by any one not knowing the combination."

"Humph!" grunted McIntyre, running his powerful hand over his rapidly graying hair. "You talk like a child." He banged his huge fist down on the arm of his

chair to emphasize his words. "I know lots of crooks who could open a steel gas tank with a toothpick."

Oberlein chewed his cigar doggedly. "Nevertheless, Mack," said he, "it's an inside job. One of our employees was seen to leave this office shortly after ten o'clock last night during the terrific storm we were having about that time. The watchman of this building, as soon as he heard of our loss, came to me confidentially and told me about it."

"What did he say?" interrogated McIntyre.

"Merely that he was standing in the doorway of the building last night about ten o'clock or a few minutes after, and saw our cashier, a young man by the name of Burton Edwards, sneak out of the door which leads into the street and walk rapidly away. The watchman was sure that Edwards didn't see him."

"Is the watchman sure it was Edwards he saw?"

"Well, he says that he didn't get a good look at his face, but he is almost positive it was Edwards. He had on a tan-colored raincoat, and that identifies him too."

The detective looked incredulous. "Hasn't anybody else in this office got a tan raincoat but Edwards?" he snapped.

"I have one," was the prompt reply.

"Anybody else?" McIntyre persisted.

Oberlein rubbed his chin in thought. "Yes," he remarked. "I have one, Edwards has one, and my secretary has one. By a strange coincidence we are also the only ones in the office who know the combination of the safe."

"Who is your secretary?" demanded the detective.

"A young man by the name of Horace Lovering," answered Oberlein. "He's all right, though. Absolutely trustworthy."

"Isn't Edwards trustworthy?" questioned the detective.

"He was always supposed to be, up to this time," answered Oberlein. "However, the watchman saw him come out of—"

"You mean the watchman saw a man in a tan raincoat," snapped McIntyre irritably. "Have you said anything to anybody about your suspicions in this case?"

"No," was the reply. "I sent for you at once."

"Do you think the watchman's got sense enough to keep his mouth shut?"

"I think so."

"Then Edwards doesn't know that he is suspected, eh?"

"No. I don't think he does."

"Do you think you can call him in here without any of the other clerks suspecting what it is about?"

"Oh, yes," answered Oberlein. "I often call him in here on business."

"All right," said the detective, blowing a cloud of tobacco smoke in the air. "Let's see what he's got to say for himself."

Oberlein pushed a bell button beneath the ledge of his desk, and in a few minutes a young man entered the room. His face was round and full, and his frank, steady gaze, as he gripped the detective's hand in introduction, created a good impression immediately upon that worthy gentleman.

"Mr. Edwards," said he, lolling still farther down in his chair and smiling amiably, "Mr. Oberlein tells me that a burglar opened that lunch-box he calls a safe out in your office last night with a can opener or some other deadly weapon and rung the bell to the tune of about three thousand iron men."

Edwards grinned; Oberlein looked as though he failed to appreciate the joke.

"We thought you might be able to tell us, by this time, what the bill amounted to," continued the detective as he studied the younger man's face carefully.

Edwards drew a small book from his coat pocket. "I figure it to be exactly three thousand two hundred and ten dollars," he stated.

"In what denominations were the bills?" asked McIntyre.

"All in small bills, as I recall it," answered the cashier. "I think it was all in bills of from one to twenty."

"Humph!" grunted McIntyre. "Pretty big bundle of money. How is it that it wasn't deposited?"

"We always take in a large amount on the first of the month," interrupted Oberlein. "It's pay day for the majority of people, and we keep open until late in the evening to handle the crowd. The bank is closed by the time we are through."

"Does all the office force stay on these occasions?" asked McIntyre.

"No." Oberlein gave the detective a significant but covert wink. "Nobody stays but Mr. Edwards and his assistant."

McIntyre eyed the young man critically. "You didn't see any suspicious characters hanging around last night when you closed up, did you?"

Edwards's voice was steady and his gaze was frank and honest as he answered: "No, sir. I left the office about seven-thirty. I locked the safe and after turning out the lights shut the door and locked it."

"Didn't come back this way again the rest of the evening, eh?"

"No, sir."

"Home all evening, were you?"

The young man's body stiffened perceptibly. "No," he said, directing a steady gaze upon the detective's good-natured face. "I left the house about nine o'clock and came back about ten-thirty."

"Any objections to telling us where you were during that time?" asked McIntyre bluntly.

The young man hesitated a moment before answering. His eyes rested upon Oberlein's face. His lips tightened. "I would prefer not to," he answered respectfully.

McIntyre waved his hands indifferently. "Have it your own way," he remarked, as he arose heavily from his chair and advanced toward the cashier, who had arisen to his feet. To Oberlein's astonishment, the detective grasped the young man's hand cordially.

"Mighty glad to have met you, Mr. Edwards," said he, leading the young man toward the door and smiling in his most friendly manner. "I hope you and I will become good friends."

Before shutting the door McIntyre cast a critical glance at Edwards's back as he walked through the outer office, then turned to Oberlein.

"Send for your secretary, Bob," he commanded.

More manipulation of the push button by Oberlein summoned a sallow-faced youth, clothed modishly, his jet black hair plastered down flat to his well-shaped head. He acknowledged the introduction to McIntyre with a listless

nod of the head. McIntyre went straight to the point. He flashed his badge.

"Mr. Lovering," said he, "there was over three thousand dollars stolen from this office last night between ten o'clock and ten-thirty, as near as we can figure it. We have every reason to believe that one of the men employees took that money. I would like to ask you, just as a matter of form, a personal question. Each man in the office will be asked the same question, so I need not tell you that no offense is intended."

The young man smiled in a disinterested manner. "Go ahead," said he.

The detective gazed steadily at the sallow face before him. He prided himself on being able to read character at a glance.

"Where were you between ten and ten-thirty last night?" he asked, lazily falling into his chair again, his cigar gripped tightly between his teeth.

For answer the young man grinned and reaching into his coat pocket produced a small blue ticket. This he handed to the detective. "At the theatre," he remarked.

"Humph!" grunted McIntyre, as he examined the small piece of paste-board. It was the stub of the original ticket. It was dated the day before and called for a certain seat in the orchestra at the evening performance at the Bijou Theatre.

McIntyre grunted to himself again. "An alibi, eh?" he soliloquized. Aloud he said: "Do you mind standing with your back to me a moment, Mr. Lovering?"

The young man obeyed. McIntyre carefully measured his broad shoulders and his height with his eyes.

"That will be all, Mr. Lovering," he announced as he handed back the ticket stub. He arose from his chair and casually sauntered over to the window.

Lovering turned to leave the room, but halted as his hand reached the door-knob.

"Mike Devrin, the ticket taker at the Bijou, can tell you that I was at the show last night," he said, a supercilious smile hovering about his thin lips. "He saw me go in. I know him personally. He took my ticket at the door, and I stopped and talked to him for a few moments."

McIntyre's attitude was one of extreme cordiality as he turned and advanced toward Lovering.

"Forget it," he commanded. "These questions were merely a matter of form. Had to do it because we had to do the same by the other boys. Unavoidable." He grinned amiably. "How'd you like the show?" he asked.

Lovering smiled. "All right," said he. "I've seen better, though."

"How'd you like the little girl who sang, 'He's the Lovinest Man I know'?" McIntyre grinned broadly. "She could sing, couldn't she?"

Lovering laughed. "She was clever, all right."

The detective laughed, reminiscently. "That was a funny guy who played the part of the millionaire hobo, wasn't it?"

The younger man bent double with laughter.

"And say"—the detective roared with laughter and playfully slapped Lovering on the back—"How 'bout the chap who told the story about the razor strop?"

Oberlein watched them as they both doubled with laughter. McIntyre's chuckles were spontaneous and Oberlein felt like giggling himself.

Suddenly he noticed the expression on the detective's face change. Quickly it straightened out and again took on that determined, forceful look.

"I don't think you saw that show," McIntyre remarked.

Grasping Lovering by the arm, he led him over to Oberlein's desk.

"Call up Headquarters, Bob, and tell them to send the wagon up," he commanded sharply. "Here is your thief."

Lovering's face was ashen hued, his eyes bulged and his features twitched horribly.

"Sure you haven't made a mistake, Mack?" suggested Oberlein.

McIntyre grinned. "Nope," said he. "He's the fellow we want. In the first place, I don't like his face. He's about the same build as Edwards, and I think it would be kind of hard to tell them apart in the dark if they both wore raincoats and you only got a glimpse of their backs. Furthermore, he wasn't at the show last night."

"How do you know?" asked Oberlein in amazement. "The doortender saw him enter the place. He talked with him."

The detective made a grimace. "Yep," said he, "that's true, too, but I'll bet my hat he didn't see him go out. That alibi was too good to be true, but at that Lovering might have got away with it if he hadn't gone out of his way to tell me about the ticket-taker knowing him. He knew his alibi was a good one, and he was too anxious to let me know the whole thing. He hated to waste any of it. He knew he had to figure on meeting the watchman when he came back to the office to get the money, so he fixed up the alibi to use in case he needed it."

The "wagon" arrived a few minutes later, and Lovering was turned over to the two husky policemen who accompanied it.

"Did you see the show at the Bijou, Mack?" asked Oberlein after they had gone.

The detective grinned. "No," said he. "That was just a little trick of mine. There's tricks in every trade, Bob. I got a hunch that Lovering wasn't telling the truth, so I started to tell him some imaginary things which might have happened. If he had been there and seen the show he would have said that he didn't remember the things I mentioned, but he had something to hide, so when I started my little trick working, all he could do was to agree with me. He didn't see the show, and he didn't know what it was like, and from the way I was talking he thought that I had seen it. The trick worked and I caught him. Besides, he's got a criminal face. This boy Edwards is one of the finest fellows I ever met."

"Well, why didn't he tell you where he was last night?" Oberlein demanded. "Why all the secrecy? I'm inclined to believe he knows more about this thing than he's willing to tell. If he didn't have something to hide, why didn't he speak up and tell us where he spent the evening?"

McIntyre grinned. "People have funny notions sometimes. This boy Edwards is all right, though, there's no question in my mind about that."

McIntyre still lingered, his huge bulk framing the doorway of Oberlein's office.

"Tell me something, Bob," he asked, smiling in an embarrassed way. "Where were you last night between nine and ten-thirty?"

Oberlein's answer showed his astonishment at the question. "I was at my club. We gave a banquet last night. Why do you ask, Mack?"

McIntyre grinned comically. "Oh, nothing," he lied. "Just wanted to get something straight in my mind." He drummed abstractedly on the door-jamb with his fingertips. "Has that good-looking daughter of yours got a steady beau yet?" he asked innocently.

Oberlein's usually cool and calculating face softened. "No," he replied. "Grace isn't old enough yet."

"How old is she?" queried the big man.

"Twenty-three."

The detective grinned. "She ought to have a nice fellow calling on her," he confided to his friend. "Us old fellows never realize when a kid's grown up. Want to keep 'em kids all their lives." He wagged his head knowingly, meanwhile shaking a large, blunt finger at his friend. "She ought to have a nice beau, Bob," he reiterated. "Some fellow with a good face that works hard for a living."

"Shut up, you old match-maker," shouted Oberlein, feigning anger and pretending to look for something to throw at the big man.

Late that afternoon McIntyre appeared again at the office of the Equitable Purchasing Company. Under his arm he carried a large bundle wrapped in newspaper. As he entered the office his keen eyes looked about him, and, perceiving the cashier, Edwards, busy at his adding machine, he slouched over and stood by his desk.

"I got the money," he announced shortly, pointing to the bundle. He enjoyed the look of astonishment on the younger man's features.

"How did you get it?" asked Edwards, admiration in his eyes.

"Oh," said the detective, yawning lazily, "Lovering told me where it was after I grilled him a little bit."

Suddenly his expression changed, and he leaned over and whispered in the other's ear.

"The young 'uns can't fool an old-timer like me," he said. "I know where you were last night that you wouldn't tell."

Edwards gasped in astonishment. "Where?" he ejaculated.

"Went to see Grace Oberlein, didn't you?" chortled McIntyre, poking the other in the ribs playfully. "Went to see the boss's daughter, eh?" He chuckled loudly. Edwards's face went red.

"You can't fool an old-timer, boy," he went on, chuckling at his own joke. "I saw you two together a couple of times, and the minute you refused to answer my question in the boss's office I was wise to you." His face assumed a serious look. "I know how it is. Bob Oberlein is a fool. He's afraid he's going to lose his girl, and I can't blame him in a way because she surely is a sweet little thing, and she's all Bob's got, now that his wife is dead."

He placed his hand about two feet from the floor. "I've known Grace ever since she was that big," he said extravagantly. "And she's a mighty fine girl, sonny."

Edwards gulped. "I know that," he stammered, swallowing hard, "but her father—"

"I know how it is," McIntyre said. "Bob is an old fool. He won't let his daughter have company because he's afraid some fellow will see what a jewel she is and marry her. What do you do? Meet her on the quiet?"

The young man smiled wanly. "That's all I can do. The boss won't allow me to call at the house. Last night her aunt called up and asked me to come up and spend the evening because Mr. Oberlein had gone to the club. Grace's aunt is very kind to us. All the invitations have to come from her, because Grace won't disobey her father."

McIntyre pointed to his package. "His wrinkled face wreathed itself in smiles. "Bob needs a good talking to, and I'm going to give it to him. I'm going in and hand him this roll of kale, and then I'm going to straighten him out." He wagged his head, meanwhile winking one eye confidently. "It takes an old-timer like me to straighten him out."

Edwards's telephone bell was ringing wildly, but he heeded it not. His eyes were glued upon the slouching figure of McIntyre as he made his way straight to Oberlein's private office.

THE TWO INTRUDERS

By GEORGE ETHELBERG WALSH

SHE had spent most of the evening reading and dozing luxuriously in bed, her mind free from all anxiety and apprehension, until the ornolou clock on the top of the dresser chimed two o'clock, and then, as always on the nights when he was out, she frowned in an ineffectual effort to repress the nervousness that invariably followed.

There was a psychological reason for this, dating back to a night when he had been in real danger, and through a six sense that some women seem to possess, or perhaps mental telepathy, she had divined it and suffered in spirit as cruelly as if she had been present in body. After that the hour of two in the morning was as harrowing and fearsome to her as a Friday, the thirteenth of the month, is to the superstitious. If he was at home all was well, but absent she suffered exquisite torture until he returned.

She sat up in bed and stared at the block that had innocently changed the whole current of her emotions. All was very quiet, outside and inside. The big house was in total darkness, except for the shaded light that streamed in orange hues across the book she had been reading and the newspaper she had discarded earlier in the evening.

She was listening intently, hopefully, for sounds that would terminate her agony of waiting. Once she leaned forward eagerly, as a slight noise in the lower hall caught her attention, but as the minutes passed without its repetition she sighed in disappointment.

The day's newspaper, lying on the bed, where she had dropped it earlier in the evening, clamored for her attention now more than the yellow-backed novel—the thrilling story of the latest burglary prominently headlined on the first page increasing the nervous apprehension that the tinkling of the clock had awakened in her.

She knew the story by heart, every detail of it, but re-reading it now at two o'clock in the morning, waiting anxiously for him to return, she held her breath as if it were the climax to a sensational novel. It was more sensational than most novels, just as the reality is frequently more thrilling and convincing than the subtlest art of the fictionist—a condition that always existed, but not generally recognized until the amazing miracles of a great war thrust the doubters and skeptics into obscurity.

The midnight burglar who adopted the bizarre expedient of concealing his identity behind a green mask—the choice of color differentiating him from the common ruck of his profession fully as much as his manners and polite methods of purloining goods from the wealthy—had given endless reams of good copy to the reporters, and considerable amusement to the reading public; but the police found nothing amusing or interesting in his exploits. He had eluded and outwitted them until the mention of "The Man in the Green Mask," as the papers called him, had the same effect upon their minds as the waving of the red flag is supposed to have on the male species of the bovine herd.

It was a thrilling description of polite midnight burglary, of Raffles in flesh and blood, cool, daring and imperturbable, gallant and solicitous to the ladies, but inexorably firm and menacing to the male gentry who sought to intercept him. Resourceful, ingenious, eccentric at

times, and always affable and complaisant, he was a type that appealed to the romantic, and made it almost an honor to be robbed by him.

A smile parted the lips of the reader at a particularly apt phrase of the reporter, and then vanished, or rather froze there, when a noise in the hall below came distinctly up the stairs and entered the open doorway. She sat up, one hand clutching the paper, listening and waiting. The soft pad of a footstep on the stairs, then another, and the green-masked one was in the bed-room.

The visualization of the reality came not as a shock to her, but rather as a pleasant surprise. She was not frightened, not even startled; the smile threatened to return to her lips. Her breathing was regular and normal, but the color of her fair skin was noticeably warmer and heightened.

Behind the mask of the intruder there may have been a smile, but there was no way for her to know it. He advanced cautiously into the room, glancing from side to side as if uncertain of his surroundings. The woman spoke first, normally and without any tremor in her voice.

"What do you want? How did you get in here?" "You didn't think I dropped down the chimney, did you?"

The voice was disguised; she expected that; not the faintest intonation was familiar.

"Well," she added, after a pause, "now that you're here, what do you expect to get? Don't you know my husband's asleep in the next room, and if I call him he'll kill you?"

"Can the talk, lady. You're alone up here. The servants are asleep downstairs, and if you got a hubby it happens to be his night out."

Her eyes narrowed a little, and her heart took an extra flop, but for all that she was quiet and self-possessed.

"Suppose I admit that," she said quietly, "but said I had you covered with a gun, and know how to shoot straight. What then?"

"I'd say, hands up! And be pretty damn quick about it!"

The sudden, impetuous ring of the voice startled her so that her right hand, that had been concealed under the paper, automatically came into view. It was empty! The man in the green mask snorted.

"Kidding me, wasn't you?" he chuckled. "Well, for a second you got me scared."

"Bob!" she exclaimed a little petulantly, her voice showing traces of annoyance.

"None of that!" growled the intruder. "You call again and I'll—well," shaking his head, "you know what."

For the first time her eyes looked puzzled. She stared at him in silence. When he came nearer, she swayed uncertainly between a desire to scream and laugh.

The green-masked burglar moved toward the dresser. Her rings and diamonds were spread out carelessly, a feast to greedy eyes.

"I'll take these," he said, slipping them in a pocket. "No objections, lady? Thanks!"

He moved toward the bureau and examined its contents with swift, appraising eyes. A jeweled wrist-watch attracted his attention.

"Reckon you don't need this as much as I do," he leered, pocketing it. "It ain't an heirloom, is it?"

"It was a present from my husband," she replied slowly, "and as such I prize it. Will you kindly restore it? There are other things worth more to you."

Her coolness seemed to puzzle him, and as if suspicious of the presence of another he glanced hastily back of him, behind the curtains, and then out into the hallway again.

"What are you looking for out there?" she mocked. "Don't you think if my husband were here he'd had you before this? He's a big man, about your size, and with the same walk, except he doesn't limp. Where'd you get that limp?"

"None o' your——"

"Bob," she interrupted, laughing musically, "why carry the absurd farce further?"

"Stop that, lady, or I'll make you!" snarled the intruder, turning almost savagely on her. "If your Bob comes I'll drill him. Get that?"

He whirled the automatic threateningly almost under her nose. She could see the flash of the eyes through the narrow slits in the mask. It was well simulated anger; it was as real as the genuine thing. She shrugged her pretty shoulders, and drew the flimsy lace across them.

"All right," she murmured. "What do you want next?"

"That ring on your finger," snapped the burglar, reaching a claw to take it.

"Oh, but that's my wedding ring," she protested feebly, retreating to the far side of the bed, and staring at the outstretched hand. "I—I can't!"

"Take it off!" came the crisp command. "Or—or——"

He came nearer, the fingers touching her hot flesh and making her wince.

"I—I—thought you were always a gentleman—even when a burglar," she stammered, still holding the ring finger from him.

A queer, crackly laugh escaped his lips. "Newspaper bunk," he said. "There ain't no such thing as a gentleman burglar. Forget it, lady, and hand me over that ring."

"Wait!" she exclaimed breathlessly, her eyes staring at the claw-like hand creeping over closer to her. "That—that hand—I—it—it——"

She shrank back from it, as if it were some hideous, loathsome thing. The face and eyes were genuinely alarmed. The intruder glanced from her to his own hand.

"What's the matter with it?" he growled, withdrawing it a little. Then in a clumsy attempt to be facetious, "It ain't a pretty hand, lady, like one of yours, but it can do what it aims to do." He closed and unclosed the fingers, twisting and curving them in imitation of a strangle hold upon an invisible neck. "It's a hand that don't let go once it gets a hold," he chuckled. "Get me?"

With difficulty she checked the scream that sprang to her lips as he made a gesture to choke her. She shivered violently. There was no acting now; she was afraid, terrified, where before she had been ironically amused. This was no gentle, courteous Raffles, with the breeding and qualities of a gentleman, but a coarse, brutal, commonplace burglar.

"If you touch me," she said, breathing hard, "I'll scream."

The man chuckled. "Lot o' good it will do you. There ain't nobody in the house but the servants, and they can't hear you."

"But the window—it's open."

He turned, and finding that she had lied he whirled on her with a savage snarl. "You little she devil! I'll make you pay for that." He approached the bedside again. Beneath the lower edge of the mask she could see his under lip curl, emphasizing a cleft in his chin. A grin or leer was there, half concealed from view. "You want a gentleman burglar, eh?" he said, chuckling. "Well, lady, you'll have your wish. I ain't stuck on your looks. I got another gal that's got you skinned in that particular. But I'm obliging. I'll take a kiss or two, and mebbe a hug. Where'll you have 'em? On the ruby lips or the lily-white throat?"

"Go away!" she breathed in deep disgust and fear. Then, tugging desperately at the ring on her third finger, she twisted it off. "Here, take it!" she added. "But—but don't touch me."

In fear and desperation she caught up the pillow and held it as a shield between them. This feminine ruse amused him; he chuckled with glee, and with one hand tore the pillow from her clutch and flung it across the room. They gazed at each other in silence, she terrified but mentally alert, he exultant and off his guard.

"If you come nearer," she defied in a low, steady voice, "I'll unmask you. I can do it. I'll do it if it's my last gasp."

"Uh-h-h! Yes, you could do it," he faltered, hesitatingly. "But lot o' good it would do you. I'd kill you then."

"No," she replied calmly, recovering her composure. "You wouldn't dare. You're not the kind to risk your life for a kiss."

"How do you know I ain't?" he asked, scowling behind his mask.

"How!" she repeated, shrugging her shoulders. "How! Because, smiling, you lack the qualities of a gentleman, and none——"

A low growl interrupted her. "Don't you get fresh, young lady, or you'll see. I could twist that pretty throat and——"

Something in the hall creaked, an almost imperceptible noise, but the wary thief was instantly alert. A moment of tense silence followed, his head craned forward in a listening attitude. For an instant the fleeting thought that she could lean over and snatch the green mask from the face before he could protect himself chased all other ideas from her brain; but she was too late. The man straightened up suddenly. He tiptoed to the door, and swiftly glanced up and down the hall.

When he came back to the bedside he was no longer in a mood for talking. The false alarm had awakened fear in him. At heart he was a coward—brave only when his enemy was a woman or a man with the drop on him.

"I got to be going," he grumbled. "Where's your purse? Quick, spit it out! I ain't got no time to waste."

"It's in the top drawer of the bureau," she replied promptly, anxious to buy off any further attempt at familiarity. The situation had unnerved her. If he tried to touch her again, she knew she would scream or faint or do something equally futile. She had never dreamed that a burglar could be so offensive; so utterly coarse and revolting. Until then she had never visualized the part of the one who had to pay; it had been the romantic side of the burglar that had appealed to her.

The man's broad back was to her. With the light shining on it and the back of his head, she saw lines of familiarity that made her shiver and draw back in doubt. The lips whitened, and the breath came in labored gasps.

She was not so afraid of him now as of the other thing. If it turned out to be a reality and not a hideous night-

mare, she felt she could never stand it. There were some things worse than death.

He was still pawing at the contents of the bureau, his back to the bed, her eyes following his every movement with something worse than fear in them, when the jarring of a muffled footstep awakened both of them from their abstraction.

"Throw up your hands!" came a clear voice.

With a snarl the burglar whirled around, dropping the jewelry in his haste and scattering it on the floor; but automatically his hands went over his head. There had been a ring in the new voice that carried conviction. Both the woman and the burglar gasped. Stabbing in the doorway was a second green-masked intruder, holding a revolver in one hand to force obedience to his words. The first burglar stumbled backward against the bureau.

"Take off that mask!" came the second crisp command.

As if hypnotized, the man obeyed, revealing an evil, commonplace type of criminal face, with a scar on the left cheek and cleft in the chin. The nose was bruised on one side, and the thick lips stained with nicotine. Altogether, it was a repulsive, cringing face that no one would care to meet in the dark.

"Gat Huggins!" commented the masked one in the doorway.

"Ye-yes, sir," stammered Gat.

The other advanced menacingly. "You little rat, I didn't think you had the brains or the nerve to attempt a cheap imitation of me," he said slowly.

"I—I didn't mean to—to—to—"

"Shut up! Don't make excuses! Where's your gun?"

Gat indicated by a move that he had dropped it on the top of the bureau.

"All right. Leave it there. Now empty your pockets. Don't forget anything."

The cringing thief, masquerading as another, promptly complied with the command, obeying with such alacrity that the woman on the bed curled her lips in contempt. He was more of a coward than she had surmised; he was like a whipped cur, ready to lick the hand that thrashed him. When he had restored all the stolen goods he faced the man in the green mask, his limbs quaking, his eyes appealing.

"It was just a joke, boss, me imitating you," he whined. "I didn't mean nothing, but the bulls was on me trail, and I had to pick up something to get away. I wisht' now I hadn't done it."

His fear of the man in the green mask was evidently greater than that of the police, and his face blanched white, waiting for the other to speak.

"It was a dirty trick, Gat. I'll say that. But you nearly got away with it."

He nodded toward the bed. "How'd you treat the lady, like a gentleman burglar?"

"I didn't touch her, s'elp me Gawd!" he whined.

There was withering scorn and contempt in the fair eyes of the woman. "I see," added the masked one, "you didn't touch her, but you insulted her. Get down on your knees!"

Gat dropped so quickly that his kneepans hurt.

"Turn your face to the lady!"

With the automatic promptness of a machine operated by a string he complied.

"Now apologize! No, I won't help you. Say it yourself, but say it quick."

The lips opened and closed twice before any sound escaped them. Then thickly he stumbled, "I'm sorry, lady,

for—for what I said or done. You ain't got no hard feelings again'!"

"Get up! Take him away!" came a contemptuous voice from the bed. "He makes me sick."

Gat stumbled to his feet. The man in the green mask prodded him in the ribs with his gun. "You're in the lady's disfavor, Gat," he said. "She's telling you to get out. Understand? Then step lively. I'll follow. No, this way."

"Where to, boss?"

"Down the stairs. I'll light the way."

As if familiar with the lighting intricacies of the house, he touched a button and flooded the hall with electricity. Gat blinked and stumbled for the stairs. The green-masked unknown was at his heels.

"No, not the front door, you fool," came the order when they reached the first floor. "The basement way of course. That's where you entered."

Gat gulped and nodded. He had no heart to deny any of his movements. His one desire was to get away from that green mask which seemed to exercise an uncanny power over his senses. He hoped the door would close between them, but it did not. They were both outside in the cool air.

"The park," was the curt direction, "and don't look behind. If you do I'll plug you."

Stealthily, with a wary eye upon any lurking forms, the discomfited burglar threaded the darkened streets, keeping well within the shadow of the trees, until he debouched upon the park. Once there he stopped, but didn't look around.

"Where next, boss?" he asked.

There was no answer. He repeated it, and then whirled around. The man in the green mask had vanished.

"Gawd, he ain't here!" came the exclamation.

Then drawing a deep sigh of relief, he turned the collar of his coat up around his neck and sneaked stealthily off into the park.

At ten minutes of three the front door of the big house opened, and a man of athletic build in evening clothes entered and bounded lightly up the stairs. The woman on the bed was waiting for him. Her vigil for the night was over.

"Oh, Bob!" she cried, as he entered the chamber, a smile of affection on his face.

"Waiting for me, dear?" he asked, kissing her tenderly.

"It's late, isn't it? You shouldn't wait up for me. It gets on your nerves, I see. I must train you differently. You're still only a child, and it's not too late."

She shook her head and disengaged herself from his embrace. Her eyes were upon his. "No, I'm not a child any more," she said, a gray, wan smile on her lips. "I'm a woman to-night, Bob, grown up, and—and—oh, I can't stand it any more! We must—must part, Bob, unless—unless you give it up."

"Give it up, Lucille?" he echoed. "Give it up? You mean it?"

She nodded silently, her eyes moist and shining, but unflinching. They were more beautiful in their awakening than in the slumberous innocence of girlhood. They were eyes that a man could die for. He was silent for a long time, considering—considering many things.

"All right," he spoke finally, smiling. "We can't part. I won't let you go."

"Then—" longingly, hopefully.

"Yes," he said, leaning down to close his lips with a kiss. "Yes, you're right. I must give it up before it's too late."

TRAILING A CLEVER THIEF

By H. W. LONG

ONE of the most difficult cases Jack Vale, the detective, ever helped work up was that of a highway robbery—or robberies, for there had been several—which was perpetrated in a country township about twenty-five miles from the city.

It was supposed there was a gang of them, no vagrant footpads, but regular yeggs, called knights of the road—daring, shrewd, and cleverly organized. One supposed to be the leader was a man of powerful frame, and was usually mounted upon a fine animal. From his disguising slouch hat and close-fitting black mask, it was impossible, of course, to determine what his features were like.

The scene of his operations was a strip of level highway winding through a thinly populated district, and diverging at one point into two roads—one leading into a small village three or four miles beyond, and the other an old and rarely used wood track circling the base of a low and thickly wooded hill. This hilly wood was a dismal place, and afforded abundant coverts for hiding and paths for secure retreat. However, the masked and mounted robber had never yet disappeared by way of the old wood track.

His last victim was an elderly gentleman, known as Uncle Josh Thatcher, who lived with his family in a large, old-fashioned house just outside the village, and came to business in the city daily.

He was the proprietor of an establishment for the sale of costly iron machinery, and had amassed considerable wealth. Thatcher often made heavy sales after bank closing hours, and as a consequence was in the habit of carrying large sums with him. On the occasion of the robbery he had nearly two thousand dollars in his pocket.

He had reached home that evening at his usual time, and the incident of his having such an amount had not been mentioned even to the members of his family. Thatcher found a letter awaiting him. It was from an aged and invalid relative living at a little distance; and the writer begged him to permit his daughter—a most beautiful young girl—to pay her aunt an early visit.

"Pack your trunk to-night, Susie," Thatcher had said to his daughter. "I will drive over with you in the morning. If we leave here about sunrise, I can start for the city from her place, and get down to business about as soon as if I should start from our village station."

It was scarcely day-break the next morning when he was driven from his own door and headed the team down the winding road across that stretch of lonely level country. They were nearing the point where the old wood track forked into the highway, when there was the sudden clatter of hoofs, and a voice commanding the coachman to stop.

For answer the man struck his horses a furious blow with the whip, and they bounded forward at a lightning pace. Through the rainy gloom of the early daybreak, Mr. Thatcher and his daughter saw a masked horseman as he flashed past one of the coach windows, and again they heard him order their driver to stop. But the coachman at this juncture could not have checked his horses had he been inclined to do so. Mettlesome, fresh from

their stables, and terrified by the stinging lash—they were beyond control. They had already become unmanageable when they were startled anew by a pistol report, and by a bullet whizzing over their ears, and another crashing through the coach windows.

They wheeled short and plunged in a blind frenzy through a gap in the roadside hedge. The next second they were floundering helplessly in a narrow space where they had fallen amid trees and wild shrubbery, and the coach lay with a broken axle and half overturned.

Mr. Thatcher's right arm had been badly wounded by the robber's bullet, and he was incapable of much resistance when the masked horseman dismounted and proceeded coolly to rifle his pockets.

His daughter had sprung screaming from the carriage only to sink insensible upon the ground; the coachman seemed stupefied at the attack and offered no defense whatever. It was all over in a flash of time, and the masked highwayman galloped away with his plunder. He had scarcely disappeared when a party of villagers, returning from a country ball, had turned a curve in the road and hastened to their assistance.

One of the party, or one who had appeared with them, was Cyril Herrick, a young man who had been a resident of the village for some years.

He was a suitor for the hand of Mr. Thatcher's beautiful young daughter, and the old gentleman warmly sanctioned his calls.

When he saw the young lady lying senseless he seemed overcome with anxiety and indignation.

"Whoever has done this shall answer to me for it," young Herrick said, as he knelt and lifted the deathlike figure of the girl.

But Susie had not been harmed by the bullet which had wounded her father. She had fainted in her terror, and was soon restored to her senses.

Mr. Herrick wrapped her cloak about her, and the carriage was righted sufficiently to shelter her from the rain until a conveyance could be procured. Meanwhile the coachman had recovered from his stupor of fright and disentangled the horses, which had escaped with a few bruises.

And then Mr. Thatcher, whose alarm for his daughter had almost deprived him of the power of thought, turned his attention at once to the possible recovery of his two thousand dollars.

Mr. Thatcher telegraphed to Vale immediately. Fortunately the detective had no urgent engagement on hand, and started without delay. Within four hours after the highwayman had galloped off with his plunder, Jack was on the scene of his operations.

On the spot where the coach had broken down he found something which he believed would afford an ultimate clue. It was a single diamond, not larger than a hemp seed, but perfect in color, shape, and the cut of its facets. The detective found it within the coach, gleaming like a speck of fire, on the rug of the floor.

It had undoubtedly dropped from a pin or ring worn by the robber when he thrust his head and shoulders in-

side the carriage to rifle the pockets of his wounded victim.

Then he proceeded to interview each of the highwayman's previous victims that he could find.

Their stories were all similar. They had all been stopped at that same point and just at a time when they happened to have an unusual amount of money with them.

From that latter fact it was evident that the robber was familiar with the habits and business relations of his victims. But one puzzling circumstance was that he had never appeared more than once on the same animal; one had remarked that his horse was iron gray, another that he was mounted on a roan, and yet another that he rode a sorrel.

While he was pursuing his investigations Mr. Thatcher had not been idle, it seemed.

"I have spotted the young scoundrel," he said when Vale went up to the Thatcher house late that evening.

"Indeed!" ejaculated Jack in astonishment.

"I have sworn out a warrant for the fellow's arrest. The horse the thief rode last night was a brown, with four white feet. There isn't another such animal in the vicinity. Young Lester was seen saddling the brown in the pasture by the wood lot, just before daybreak this morning. Isn't that evidence conclusive?"

"It isn't conclusive at all. Johnny Lestre is as innocent as I am," cried Mr. Thatcher's daughter, bursting into tears. "You will lock him up for nothing but to let his poor old mother starve and to break my heart."

"I won't hear a word of such nonsense, Susie," her father said, with a frown. The detective learned later that a tender attachment existed between pretty Susie and the suspected young man, and that Cyril Herrick was a lover of her father's choosing and not her own.

Young Lestre was a gardener and florist in a small way. He was the reverse of wealthy, and therefore was not considered a fitting mate for the daughter of the wealthy machinery dealer. Mr. Herrick himself was opposed to the arrest of the young florist gardener.

"It will only frighten the gang. It would be better to put a detective on the track, and so nab the whole of them," he said.

Vale agreed with the latter gentleman in thinking the immediate arrest of Johnny Lestre would be a mistake. But Jack differed with his opinion that there was a gang, although, of course, he did not express as much. However, he advised Mr. Thatcher to defer the serving of the warrant for a few days at last.

Early the next morning Vale walked over to the florist's little shop.

He was a fine-looking young fellow of not more than twenty-three; his manner was pleasing and honest; his countenance was frank and intelligent. It seemed that Cyril Herrick had already warned him of the suspicion against him, and the fact of Mr. Thatcher's warrant.

"I know my horse was taken out of the pasture by some one," he said. "She had the marks of a saddle on her back when I went down for her. But the same thing has been noticed with the other horses in adjoining pastures, and always on a morning after one of the strange robberies."

A ray of light had flashed upon the mysterious case. The masked highwayman had undoubtedly, with consummate cunning, on the occasion of each robbery, exchanged his own horse for one from the pastures.

And if he had done this, Vale had no doubt of finding a clue of importance in searching the hilly wood. Lighting a cigar he strolled leisurely out of the village, taking the road in that direction.

Half-way to the wood and the point where the robberies were committed, the detective discovered that there was a set of bars opening into the pasture, and diagonally opposite another set opening into the old wood track. That explained the course which the cunning crook had taken when he disappeared.

Vale followed the route and presently entered the wood itself. There were several paths, barely discernible, branching on either hand. He took one at random, and after a short walk, winding and ascending, found himself before what seemed a natural grotto, formed of huge boulders. Without the slightest thought of danger, he passed through the low narrow entrance, but had scarcely done so when there was a crash, a thud of some heavy substance behind him.

As he whirled back he was in total darkness.

Something like a thick, black wall had crashed before the opening, and Vale was a prisoner in what might be a living tomb.

Vale's first sensation was of utter astonishment. His next was profound wonder at what had caused such an unpleasant state of affairs. But he was seldom without a resource of some kind for emergencies. His resource now was a small electric torch, which he invariably carried. The place appeared to be a rocky cave.

The whole part nearest the entrance was not more than nine feet in height and breadth, and from various signs he judged the place had been used some time in the past by lumberjacks as a sort of store-room for their axes and other implements.

After glancing about his prison itself, he turned his attention to the narrow opening.

The thud and crash had been caused by the violent banging shut of a rude door made of two rough slabs of unknown thickness and fastened or hung by an arrangement of staples mortised firmly in the solid rock. Vale thrust himself against it, but it was an unyielding as a wall of granite.

The detective was as much a prisoner as if he had been immured in the depths of an old dungeon.

Being compelled to accept this not particularly exhilarating conclusion, he began a more extensive examination of the cave-hut.

Even in his disagreeable predicament he could not restrain an exclamation of satisfaction as he perceived a saddle, bridle and a black mask which had been flung upon a pile of straw in one corner. A few paces farther back he espied an empty wallet, and a thin leather book such as is used sometimes for carrying bank-notes. Vale had discovered the retreat employed by the highwayman in concealing the traces of his crime!

When Vale stepped inside the hut-cave, he must have been skulking in the undergrowth close behind. The instant Vale was within he had banged shut the slab door and made him a prisoner.

In all his varied and many perilous experiences as a detective Vale had never found himself in quite as desperate a straight as this. The detective had begun to think that he might as well resign himself to the prospect of starvation and death in that lonely cave-hut. His flashlight had exhausted its supply of current; he was again in total darkness; and his last glance at his watch told him he had already been there a couple of hours.

Suddenly he became aware that there was a faint glimmer of light in the narrowing end of his prison. A close inspection revealed a space between two boulders; and this space was filled in with a layer of turf intersected with stout tree roots.

Vale remembered having noticed a rusty crow-bar lying

near the entrance. In another moment he had it in his grasp, and had begun prying apart the coiled roots which admitted the faint glimmer of light.

"Eureka!" he ejaculated, as a desperate wrench dislodged a foot square layer of turf.

But it was despairing work; twice he flung down the crow-bar, and gave himself up for lost.

But when he had finally accomplished the feat, the sun had long set and told it was near midnight.

He did not return to the Thatcher house, but made a detour of the wood until he struck the railway, and walked a couple of miles down the track to a way station, from whence he started back to the city. He had determined to secure an assistant in ferreting out the mystery of these remarkable robberies. There was connected with the agency at this time a Western girl, who was as keen on the trail as a foxhound. The name does not matter; she has since become the wife of a prominent gentleman, and is living a quiet, domestic life. But the next day she went down to the scent of the robberies as Mrs. Wescott, and procured a stylish boarding-house, and introduced herself as a widow lady of wealth and position. Jack Vale followed her as a brother; and had so altered his appearance that even Mr. Thatcher would not have recognized him.

The old gentleman was highly indignant over Vale's disappearance; and young Lestre was in terror of the warrant which had not yet been served, but which hung suspended like the sword of Damocles over him.

Nearly a week passed.

Mrs. Wescott had successfully cultivated the society of the little village, and she had also developed a passion for equestrenne exercise.

Her morning constitutional was a canter over the ten-mile stretch of road which wound across the level country to the county seat. She was expecting a large remittance, which would be received by her lawyers in that town, she claimed.

On one of these rides she met Cyril Herrick, who was an enthusiastic horseman.

The encounter seemed to have a puzzled effect upon her. They must have met somewhere previously, she fancied. "He stopped, his horse directly in my path. When I pulled up my own, he sat staring at me as if he had seen a ghost," the girl detective said to Vale later.

Vale had finally traced the diamond which he had regarded as such an important clue.

It had belonged to a cluster scarf-pin, and had formed the center of a ruby star. He had traced it to a jeweler's establishment in the town; it had been purchased from him originally, and had been brought back to him, that the lost gem might be replaced. But the clue could not be regarded as very valuable without corroborative evidence. In the meantime there had been another robbery. A rich old farmer who had disposed of a quantity of grain to the shippers in the town had been waylaid on his return home, and plundered of every dollar he had received from the sale. The masked and mounted highwayman had again appeared at that same point in the road, and again he had vanished like a phantom on the road leading to the village.

The inhabitants were becoming terrified, and the local deputy sheriffs were denounced in anything but complimentary terms. Mrs. Wescott's expected remittance was considered by her new friends as certain to fall into the hands of the mysterious robber.

"My dear young lady, if you return after dark I should advise you to bring a posse of police as a guard for your purse," laughingly remarked Mr. Herrick.

Of course the remittance was but the bait of the trap in which Vale hoped to catch the cunning thief.

He and the girl sleuth were working on the theory that the suspicion against Johnny Lestre had thrown him off his guard, that he believed the only person he feared had perished in the cave-hut, and that the temptation of securing a large sum, with every apparent chance of avoiding detection, would be irresistible.

It was about half-past ten o'clock on a dark stormy evening when Mrs. Wescott approached the eventful strip of road on her way from the town. She had hired a light top-carriage and drove a sober old horse.

As her sober old horse trotted past the fork of the wood track a dark, masked figure suddenly caught the animal by the bit.

The next instant he coolly unhooked the traces and stepped up beside her. Had she been a strong man unarmed, and surprised in that daring fashion, she would have been at his mercy. As it was, he had done precisely what she had hoped. As he took her satchel from the seat beside her and proceeded to rifle her clothing of the supposed remittance, Vale sprang from the shelter of a wayside clump of bushes and grabbed him by the collar.

At the same instant his assistant presented the muzzle of a revolver before his eyes.

He had been too effectually astonished to resist, and before he fairly realized what had happened to him, a pair of handcuffs upon his wrists had completed his capture.

A horse, saddled and bridled, and evidently freshly taken from the pasture lot, was tied loosely a little distance away in the dark wood track. Mrs. Wescott led the animal as she drove toward the village and Vale followed with the sullen scoundrel, whom he still permitted to wear his black mask and disguising slouch hat. The extraordinary little procession halted at the Thatcher house; the old gentleman had not yet retired, and his amazement at beholding his supposed missing detective was almost ludicrous.

"And here is our trapped highwayman," said Vale, as he pushed his prisoner forward and pulled off the black mask to reveal the sullen and defiant visage of—the elegant and exemplary Cyril Herrick.

The unmasked crook denied nothing and confessed nothing. But the proof against him would have been almost sufficient for conviction, even if he had not been caught in the clever trap devised by the brave and keen-sighted detective.

The cluster pin was proved to be his property, and also the saddle in the cave-hut.

Besides, it appeared that he had served a short term in a Western prison for the same offense.

Mrs. Westcott had helped trail him on the former occasion of his arrest, but had been detailed on another case before he had been brought to trial.

At that time she had never seen him face to face, nor was he familiar with her appearance.

But it was a vague sense of having met her under circumstances not flattering to himself which caused his peculiarly startled expression when they had encountered each other that morning.

He was sentenced to State prison for a term of years; his stylish house in the village was sold, and the proceeds went to his creditors, of whom there were a multitude.

Uncle Josh Thatcher recovered his two thousand dollars, however, and in his gratitude at the termination of the case he shortly afterward consented to pretty Susie's marriage with honest Johnny Lestre.

THE FATAL CABINET

By ANNIE L. DIX

GAGGED, bound, and wounded! That was the condition in which Mr. Newal Niklas was discovered by his valet and servants about one o'clock on a stormy morning.

He was a man in the prime of life, tall and muscular, who had formerly been known in Wall Street as a small speculator, but had recently settled down to the enjoyment of an immense fortune, which had fallen to him by the will of his deceased wife.

He lived in a palatial house in a highly aristocratic neighborhood. The household consisted of himself, the son of his wife by a previous marriage, a beautiful young girl whom she had adopted, the ordinary number of servants, and his valet—Jules Jabeau.

The circumstances of the assault were wrapped in mystery for he seemed to have only a confused impression of what had occurred.

He stated that he had been sitting at his desk, writing and absorbed by the business in hand, when he had been stunned by a violent blow dealt by some person behind, and while partially insensible he had been bound and gagged by a large silk handkerchief being tied about his face and head.

The stinging sensation of some sharp instrument gashing his flesh had restored him to consciousness.

He had instantly exerted all his muscular power to free himself from the handkerchief, which fortunately had not been very tightly knotted.

The unexpected movement had interfered with the hand holding the weapon, and he had succeeded in shouting loudly for help. At the shout his assailant had dropped the weapon and fled. The noise of the struggle had aroused his valet, who hurried to his assistance.

It was the valet, Jules Jabeau, who was sent to get me.

Jabeau was a Frenchman, slight of frame, brisk and agile, and extremely dundish of dress. He had sallow features, eyes like yellow beads, a fringe of jet-black hair about a glossy bald crown, and a huge goatee as black as ink. Altogether there was something foxy and repellent in the aspect of the fellow. I accompanied him back to the house.

Mr. Niklas had been conveyed to his bed-chamber, and a physician summoned.

The medical man declared that the wound was superficial—a mere scratch; that the patient was suffering from high excitement, and would probably have quite recovered in a few days.

Luckily the room where the assault had taken place had been left entirely undisturbed. This had been done at the request of the wounded man. He wished me to have as favorable a chance as possible to secure any clue which his unknown assailant might have left behind him in his haste to depart.

Jabeau ushered me to the room.

It was a large square apartment on the parlor floor, and my first glance showed that somebody had tampered with the fastenings of a window opening upon a strip of grassy yard in the rear.

It would seem that the assailant might have escaped by that way; but as the fastenings were broken on the inside, he must have effected an entrance by some other method. I made a mental note of the fact, and turned my attention to the room itself.

The first object that met my gaze was the silk handkerchief lying on the floor beside the desk. It was a cheap affair, coarse of texture, checked in gray and gold and was marked with the initials W. A. in neatly embroidered characters.

"Ah, zat handkerchief! I am vary zertain now of what I thought was so," exclaimed the French valet, thrusting his foxy visage into mine as I slipped the article into my pocket.

"What are you so certain about? If you know anything, speak."

"Ze young gentleman, Will Ansley, he not always have good feelings for ze stepfather."

"Why should Mr. Niklas's stepson have bad feelings toward him?"

"Ze young man not love him because ze leetle lady, ze mother, leave all the money to ze stepfather, and to ze son nothing at all."

Just then from the corner of the room I picked up the weapon which the assailant had presumably dropped. It was a slender-bladed dagger of peculiar and very ancient make. The handle was of silver and curiously carved. The blade was of finest steel, polished bright as a mirror; and not the least perceptible stain of any kind marred its burnished length.

Jabeau shuddered as if in horror, and uttered another expressive ejaculation.

"Zat is ze proof—ze dagger, ze handkerchief; zay belong to ze young man! I say we put him in ze prison, straight at once!"

But at the instant I had pocketed a bit of proof which the Frenchman's foxy eyes had not espied. It was a pearl-handled ink eraser, sharp as a razor, and the needle-like point was smeared with a stain.

"Where is this young man—Will Ansley?" I inquired.

As I spoke I happened to look up, and saw standing just beyond the door the beautiful young girl whom I knew to be the adopted daughter of the late Mrs. Newal Niklas.

She made a quick, timid gesture, of which I did not quite catch the meaning.

Noting my look, Jabeau turned. As he did so the girl glided swiftly away.

"Ah! ze poor leetle sweet lady, she not right here," said he, tapping his bald crown significantly.

The result of my investigations that morning was the prompt effort of Mr. Niklas in securing his stepson's arrest.

There was no help for it. He admitted the dagger and handkerchief were his, and Jules Jabeau was ready to

testify as to his frequent and bitter denunciations of the stepfather who had stepped into a property he believed rightfully his own. I must admit I felt sorry for the young fellow as the officers placed handcuffs upon his wrists and led him away to prison.

He was not more than twenty, and unless the damaging evidence against him was refuted, he would be doomed to spend ten at least of the best years of his life in captivity.

I had left the house, and had just turned into a street a block below, when the young girl I knew to be the adopted daughter—Mamie Mallarde—suddenly stepped beside me.

"I knew you would come this way; I was waiting for you," she said, in considerable excitement. "Oh, how could you, a detective, so keen and shrewd, let Will Ansley go to prison? How could you help seeing he is innocent?"

"Under the circumstances his arrest could not be prevented while his stepfather insisted upon it. And if he is innocent how do you account for his being discovered on several occasions skulking at dead of night in a room where he had no business whatever?"

Mamie began to cry and wring her hands.

"There has been a wicked wrong done Will. He was searching for a key which has been lost since his mother died. The key unlocks a little cabinet where he thinks he will find papers to give him back his property. He has told no one but me about the cabinet; he has been afraid it would get in his stepfather's hands, and then he could never get back his fortune."

"Where is this cabinet?"

"It is the gallery with the marble floor which Will's mother had fitted up with objects of antique art. It doesn't look like a cabinet meant to keep valuable papers; even Mr. Niklas doesn't know about its contents."

"Why did not Will consult a lawyer?"

"Where would have been the use without actually having the papers in his hands? His arrest is all a plot to get him out of the way. If they knew I had talked to you like this they would say I am mad, and they would send one to an asylum. They mean to do it anyway, I think."

The result of my conversation with Mamie was that I returned to the Niklas mansion late that evening. During the interval, however, I had made certain investigations which convinced me that I had undertaken nothing which was not warranted in the cause of justice.

I stationed an officer within sight of my signal, or the sound of my call, as the case might require. Then I presented myself at a rarely used entrance, as I had previously arranged with Miss Mamie.

By dint of caution the girl managed to admit me; unseen and unheard, to the antique gallery. And a queer place it was with its lofty ceiling and massive columns, its rich tapestry hangings, and its bronze knights in shining steel armor.

As I glanced at the cabinet I could scarcely restrain an exclamation of satisfaction. I had inspected its exact duplicate some years before in a certain art store, and it was precisely what I had supposed it to be from Mamie's description.

I pressed a certain point of a carved projection, and instantly that portion of the carving turned downward, revealing a tiny cavity. In the cavity lay a small silver key of peculiar workmanship.

Not a word had been spoken between us, but the girl trembled from head to foot as she dropped on one knee,

unlocked the cabinet, and drew forth several documents. Breathlessly she opened them, one by one, and glanced over them with quick eyes.

"Here is Mrs. Niklas's will," she panted, at last—"written but a few months before her death. William is named as her sole and exclusive heir."

At that instant we were both startled by the noise of hurrying feet and angry tones.

"It is Niklas and that fiend Jabeau. They suspect something," she gasped, as she thrust the papers back into the cabinet, closed it, and covered her pale face with her trembling hands.

As the doorknob turned, I extinguished the light we had used as a matter of precaution. Then I stepped behind the tapestry curtaining a window which overlooked the spot where I had stationed my officer. As I did so, Newal Niklas strode into the darkened gallery, holding a flaring night-lamp high above his head.

There was terror as well as angry astonishment on his countenance as he saw the startled girl kneeling before the cabinet. Jules Jabeau was close behind with his expressive shrug and foxy grimace.

"Ze leetle sweet lady must be put straight right away where she is safest. In ze asylum she do no harm; she is what you say?—crazy, wrong here?" and he tapped his glossy bald crown with one yellow, claw-like finger.

"What does this mean, Mamie? What are you doing here, prying through my objects of art?" Niklas demanded severely.

I heard steps along the corridor; my officer had already gained admittance and I stepped from behind the tapestry and confronted the two arch conspirators—as they were shortly proved to be.

"It means, Newal Niklas, that you are now under arrest for the forgery of a will, by which you are holding unlawful possession of Will Ansley's estate," I said, as I stepped up to him.

My appearance seemed to stupefy him. I had him securely handcuffed before he fairly realized what was happening. Meanwhile my officer had walked into the gallery and collared the Frenchman.

And then, with an assurance of protection to the frightened Mamie, and with the important documents safe in my possession, we marched our captives to prison to await trial.

They were tried shortly afterward, convicted, and are now serving out long sentences.

The story of the assault had all been a plot of Niklas to rid himself of his stepson, and the dagger had been one of the antique art curiosities of the gallery, and had been given to Will by his mother. Niklas had placed it, and also Will's handkerchief, in his room. Then he had bound and gagged himself after he had inflicted the scratch on his neck with the ink-eraser which I had found beside his desk. Next he had aroused the house with his shouts for assistance.

With his stepson in prison and Mamie Mallarde in an insane asylum, he hoped to enjoy unmolested the property he had got hold of by the clever forgery of the will of his deceased wife.

Jules Jabeau, the valet, was his accomplice, if not the actual instigator of the trickery and crime. The latter was proved to be an old offender, and his various aliases had long been enrolled in police annals.

Of course Will Ansley was promptly released, and soon afterward took possession of his immense inheritance. Mamie is now his wife. But the case might have ended less agreeably for Will and Mamie, only for the fatal cabinet—as it really was to the arch conspirators.

THE SCIENCE OF FORTUNE-TELLING

PART SEVEN—CHARACTER READING

(Continued from No. 61)

45. The lips that are moderately plump and even declare the person to be good-humored, humane, sensible, judicious and just, neither giddy nor torpid, but pursuing in every particular a just medium.

46. The lips that are thin show the person to be of a quick and lively imagination, ardent in the pursuit of knowledge, indefatigable in labor, not too much attached to money, eager in the pursuit of love, more brave than otherwise, and tolerably happy in life.

47. The lips that are thin and sunk inwards denote the person to be of a subtle and persevering disposition, everlasting in hatred, and never sparing any pains to compass his revenge; in love or friendship much more moderate and uncertain.

48. The chin that, with hollow between it and the lip, shows the person to be of a good-natured disposition, kind and honest.

49. The chin that comes down flat from the edge of the lip, ends in a kind of chisel-form, shows the person to be silly, credulous, ill-tempered and greedy of unmerited honors; capricious, wavering and unsteady; he will affect great modesty in the presence of others, though he will not scruple to do the vilest actions when he thinks himself secure from discovery. A dimple makes no alteration.

50. The chin that is pointed upward shows the person to be much given to contrivances. However fair he may speak to you, you can never depend on his friendship, as his purpose is only to make you subservient to his own designs. In love, his generosity will be of the same stamp.

51. Of the face in general I shall say, that the person whose features are strong, coarse, and unpleasant to the eye, is of a selfish, brutal, rough, and unsocial disposition; greedy of money, harsh in expression, but will sometimes fawn with a bad grace to gain his ends.

52. The face that is plump, round, and ruddy, denotes the person to be of an agreeable temper, a safe companion, hearty and jovial, fond of company, of sound principles and a clear understanding, faithful in love, &c.

53. The face that is thin, smooth, and even, with well-proportioned features, shows the person to be of a good disposition, but lively, penetrating, and active; somewhat inclined to suspicion, yet of an agreeable conversation; assiduous in the pursuits of knowledge, and strongly addicted to the delights of love.

54. A face whose cheek bones jut out with thin jaws, is of a restless and thinking disposition; fretful, and apprehensive of what may happen on the slightest cause, or what may never happen at all; always foreboding evil, without any plausible reason for such fears; more disposed than capable of enjoying the pleasures of love.

55. A face that is pale by nature denotes a timorous disposition, but greatly desirous of the pleasures of love.

56. A face that is unequally red, whether streaked or appearing in spots, shows the person to be weak both in mind and body, yielding easily to affliction and sickness.

57. A face blotched shows the person to be addicted to drinking and vice, and not even free from any vice, though they have frequently the art to conceal the inclination.

58. The head that is large and round shows that the person has tolerable understanding, but not near so good as he imagines; however, upon the whole, he is rather harmless, and not so much given to vice.

59. The head that is small and round, or if the face comes tapering, shows the person of acute, penetrating disposition, much given to bantering and humor, but of

very great sensibility; sometimes hurried by caprice, but commonly faithful in love.

60. The head that is flat on either side and deep from the face to the back, shows the person to be of a good understanding, deep penetration, great memory, and of an even and agreeable temper, but slow of belief, and not easily imposed upon. He is warm in his affections, just in his dealings, laborious in his profession, and much addicted to sobriety.

PART VIII.

CARDIOLOGY

This is the Science of Foretelling Events by Cards, Dice and Dominoes.

AS many of those events about to happen may be easily gathered from the cards, we have here affixed the definition which each card in the pack bears separately; by combining them the reader must judge for himself, observing the following directions in laying them out. First, the person whose fortune is to be told, if a *man*, must choose one of the four kings to represent himself—if a *woman*, she must select one of the queens; the queen of the chosen king, or the king of the chosen queen will stand for the husband or wife, mistress or lover of the party whose fortune is to be told, and the knave of the suit for the most intimate person of their family—you must then shuffle and cut the cards well, and let the person whose fortune is to be ascertained cut them three times, showing the bottom card; this must be repeated three times—then shuffle them again, let them be cut once, and display them in rows on the table, taking care always to have an odd number in each row, *nine* is the right number, and to place your cards exactly under each other; after this consult the situation in which the person stands by the definition we have here annexed to each card, and after having repeated it three times form your conclusions; remember that everything is within your circle as far as you can count thirteen any way from the card that represents the person, his wife or her husband, and their intimate friend; and also that the thirteenth card every way is of the greatest consequence; either the whole pack, or only the piquet cards may be used.

Another mode with the piquet cards is to shuffle and cut them, take three cards from the top, if there be two of a suit take out the highest card; if three, take all; when you have gone through the pack, shuffle and cut the remainder, and do as before, and repeat the same a third time; then take a general view of the cards drawn, and next couple them, a top and a bottom card, then shuffle and cut them into three heaps, laying one apart in the first row to form a fourth heap; the first heap at the left hand relates to yourself entirely, the next to your family, the third is the confirmation of the former two—you must proceed a second and third time, adding each time one to the single card, and then three single cards give the connection of the operation; observe you must add the card which represents the person whose fortune is consulted to the three, if it be not there already.

We have witnessed a great number of most wonderful and useful conclusions which have been produced by this

science and many future events have been foretold; but much depends herein on the ingenuity and skill of the artist, who after having duly obtained the true and full meaning that each card in the pack bears separately, and in its independent state, he must be also most fully enabled to form, judge and vary all their several mixtures, company and combinations, which are easily deducted, and calculated by any person of an ordinary common capacity, for these cards (like the planets, men and other things) are often somewhat altered and changed from their natural state by the mixture of the company in which they are found, which said rule must always be duly attended to throughout the whole course of practice in the same. This divination by cards is a kind of geomantic lot, and these kind of lots were always held in the highest estimation and repute by the ancients, so that they would perform no work of great importance without first consulting these kind of lots; for whatever divination and predictions of human events are made and formed in this way and manner, must of necessity, besides the lot, have some sublime occult cause, which indeed shall not be a cause by accident, such as Aristotle (and some in our present day) describes fortune to be; for, in the series of causes, a cause by accident can never be the prime and sufficient cause. No, we must look higher, and find out a cause which may know and intend the effect. It is no matter whether we make cards or anything else the instrument with which we work in these high mysteries; let the instrument be what it will, we well know how, and by whom, the particular and general effects of every action, subject, matter, and thing, are always produced; therefore we must not place this in corporeal nature, but in immaterial and corporeal substances, which indeed administer the lot, and dispense the signification of the truth; as in men's souls or departed spirits, or in celestial intelligences. Now that there is in a man's soul a sufficient power and virtue to direct such kind of lots, it is hence manifest, because there is in our souls a divine virtue and similitude, apprehension and power of all things, and all things have a natural obedience to it, and so of necessity have a motion and efficacy to that which the soul desires, with a strong vehement desire, and all the virtues and operations of natural and artificial things obey it, when it is carried forth into the excess of desire, and then all lots of what kind soever are assisting to the appetite of such a mind, and acquire to themselves wonderful virtues of passages, as from that, so from the celestial opportunity in that hour in which the excess of such like appetite doth most of all exceed in it. And this is that ground and foundation of all astrological and geomantic questions; wherefore the mind being thus elevated in the excess of any desire, taketh of itself an hour and opportunity most convenient and efficacious, on which the figure of the heavens being made and set, the artist may then judge the same, and plainly know concerning any subject, matter, or thing, which he may desire or be inquisitive to know. Therefore, whatsoever kind of presage these sort of lots portend and promise, it cannot be made by mere chance, but from a spiritual cause, by virtue whereof the phantasy or hand of him that casteth the lot is moved, either by that power which proceeds from the soul of the operator, through the great excess of his affection, or from a celestial influence, or from a certain spirit assisting or moving from on high. Let the said instruments, which are used in these kind of operations, be made and composed of what they will, whether of cards or geomancy, or anything else, the effect is still the same, seeing that there are a kind of certain lots that have a divine power of oracles, and are as it were indexes of divine judgment.

The method of using the cards is both innocent and will afford you amusement, while that common, destructive, and most pernicious habit of gaming, would otherwise tend to promote and complete the ruin of both your soul and body.

How many very respectable people have there been thus ruined? How many fine young men have there been brought to the scaffold, and other such wretched, doleful places, by this most dangerous vice, gaming! We have many times seen and witnessed, even in common families, living in country villages, that the losers (even when they have been playing for nothing) have had their countenances deranged and disfigured to an excessive degree, accompanied by language the most diabolical they could possibly invent, in order to vent their rage and passion on what they term ill-luck, even to the utter destruction of their souls and bodies, together with the discomposure and abuse of the company in which they chance to be mixed, and are both a disgrace to themselves and all around them; yet this is what they generally call an innocent game of cards; let us ask our readers what must be the case when they are playing for large and considerable sums of money; then their peace of mind and the happiness and tranquillity of their poor unfortunate families must go to ruin. Reader, let us always avoid such destructive and most dangerous company; lest we, like a great many other such unfortunate beings, may chance to meet our repentance when it comes too late.

The Ace of Clubs

Is a letter, and promises great wealth, much prosperity in life, and tranquillity of mind.

The King of Clubs

Announces a man who is humane, upright, affectionate and faithful in all his engagements—he will be happy himself, and make every one with whom he has connection so if he can.

The Queen of Clubs

Shows a tender, mild, and rather amorous disposition; one that will probably yield her maiden person to a generous lover before the matrimonial knot be tied; but that they will be happy, love each other, and be married.

The Knave of Clubs

Shows a generous, sincere, and zealous friend, who will exert himself warmly for your interest and welfare.

The Ten of Clubs

Denotes great riches to come speedily from an unexpected quarter—but it also threatens that you will at the same time lose some very dear friend.

The Nine of Clubs

Shows that you will displease some of your friends by too steady an adherence to your own way of thinking—nor will your success in the undertaking reconcile them to you, or procure your own approbation.

The Eight of Clubs

Shows the person to be covetous, and extremely fond of money; that he will obtain it, but that it will rather prove a torment than a comfort to him, and he will not make a proper use of it.

The Seven of Clubs

Promises the most brilliant fortune, and the most exquisite bliss that this world can afford; but beware of the opposite sex, from them you can alone experience misfortune.

(To be continued)

THE MEANING OF DREAMS

APPARITIONS.—To dream you see a ghost, hobgoblin, specter, and such things, is of a very unfortunate nature, they denote vexation and disappointment; if you are in love, it is a certain sign of your not being beloved in return, that the object of your affections either hates you or despises you; depend upon it some one is about to deceive you and that you are in the habit of friendship with one who is your most inveterate enemy; do not undertake a journey just at this time, for it will be unfortunate to you, and be careful of contracting debts, for such a dream forebodes great trouble through some one to whom you shall owe money.

ASPS.—To dream of asps denotes that you will become extremely rich, and have great quantities of money by you if you are in love, it imports that your love will be returned and that your sweetheart will become through your means extremely wealthy.

BAILIFFS.—To dream you are arrested by bailiff is a sign you will escape some heavy misfortune; but it also foretells that your present sweetheart will never marry you, and that you will be overreached in a bargain.

BACON.—To dream of bacon denotes the death of some friend or relation, and enemies will endeavor to do you a mischief; in love, it denotes disappointment and discontent.

BAGPIPES.—To dream of this instrument of Scottish music indicates that the dreamer will experience great trouble, and that he will labor to little purpose; in love, it denotes that the marriage state will be full of cares, and that you will in it experience poverty and distress.

BASIN.—To dream you are eating or drinking out of a basin is a certain sign that you will soon be in love; but without great care you will not marry the first object of your affections; it denotes prosperity in trade; and to the farmer, a good crop; if you are a seafaring man, it indicates that at the next port you touch you will fall in love.

BATHING.—To dream of a bath is a very unpropitious omen; expect after it to experience many hardships and much sorrow; if you are in love, your sweetheart will experience many crosses and losses. But to dream you are bathing yourself in clear water, denotes happiness, prosperity, and success in love; if the water is dirty, then it foretells shame and sorrow, and a disappointment in love.

BEANS.—To dream of beans, is an unfavorable dream; it is the forerunner of troubles and quarrels; if you are in love, expect a difference to happen between you and your sweetheart.

BEES.—To dream of these little industrious insects, who collect the sweets of every flower, it has a variety of interpretations, according to their different situations. To dream they sting you, denotes loss of good character, and, if you are in love, of your sweetheart.

To dream you see them at work is a very lucky dream, it forebodes success by your industry; if you are a farmer be sure of good crops; if you are in love, be sure you will marry the object of your affections, and that you will have many children and become rich. To dream you see them making their honey under your own roof, is the best omen in the world; be sure that it denotes dignity in the state; riches, a good husband or wife, and many good children; in short, that whatever you take in hand will be prosperous; if you are soliciting a place, depend you will gain it, and afterwards be promoted. For the rich to dream of bees is rather unlucky; but to the poor, they denote affluence.

BEHEADING.—To dream you see any one beheaded is

a good omen; if you are in love, you will marry the object of your affections; if you are in a prison, you will speedily gain your liberty; if you are in trouble of any kind it will speedily vanish; it denotes also that you will see some friend who has long been absent, and that he will in good health.

BUILDINGS.—To dream of being amongst buildings denotes that you will change your present place of residence and that you will make many new friends in life; if you are in love it foretells your sweetheart is about to remove at a distance from you, and that you will be in danger of losing the affections of your lover by new faces.

BATTLE.—To dream you see a battle in the streets forewarns you against secret enemies, who will endeavor to harm you; if you are in love, your sweetheart is false to you.

CAGE.—To dream of letting birds out of a cage denotes a speedy marriage; to a person in business it denotes success, and to a farmer it denotes good crops.

CATS.—To dream of these domestic animals is indicative of much trouble and vexation; it denotes to the lover that your sweetheart is treacherous; if you keep servants, they are unfaithful and will rob you. To dream you kill a cat denotes that you will discover a thief and prosecute him to conviction. Expect also to lose your own liberty through the insincerity of some pretended friend.

CATTLE.—To dream you see cattle feeding denotes great prosperity and unexpected success; to a lover it foretells a happy marriage, with many children, and to the man it shows that his wife will receive some unexpected legacy. To dream you are driving cattle denotes that you will become rich by industry; if you are in love it shows that you will have many rivals, but that you will distance them all. To dream you see fat cattle also denotes a plentiful year. To dream you see lean and hungry cattle, denotes scarcity and famine.

CHICKENS.—To dream of a hen and chickens is the forerunner of ill luck, your sweetheart will betray you and marry another; if you are a farmer, you will have a bad crop and lose many of your poultry; if you are in trade some sharper will defraud you; if you go to sea you will lose your goods and narrowly escape shipwreck.

CLIMBING.—To dream you are climbing up a tree denotes that you will arrive at some honor in the state, and that you will be successful in life. If you are in love, you will marry your sweetheart, after a long courtship. To dream you are climbing up a very steep hill or place, foretells many difficulties in life, and much sickness; if you reach the top, you will get over all your difficulties, and recover from your illness; but if you awake before you have attained the top, you will be disappointed in love, and other projects in life, and die in your next illness.

CHURCH.—To dream of a church, is portentous of evil. If you are in church during divine service, you will be engaged in a law-suit, or some quarrel, that will go very near to ruin you; if you are in love, your sweetheart is unfaithful, and prefers another; if you expect a place, it forebodes disappointment; if you are in trade, you will never thrive in your present situation.

COAL-PIT.—To dream you are in a coal-pit foretells that you will shortly lead a widow to the hymeneal altar; to a maid it denotes a speedy marriage with her sweetheart, who will become rich and also to honors in the state; to the trader, it indicates that he will shortly be tricked out of a quantity of goods.

(To be continued)

CURRENT NEWS

WHAT NEXT?

From Santa Barbara, California, comes word that a horse exsared in an exposition held in that city arrived by airplane from Los Angeles. The trip was delayed a day until officers of the Humane Society were fully convinced that no cruelty was involved in the trip.

SWORD IN PLANK

Embedded in the heart of a plank of wood taken from a railway station platform at Oakley, Fifeshire, England, there has been found a sword measuring over two feet long. The plank had been in use for at least fifteen years. The weapon, which was of an old-fashioned type, a short crosspiece forming the handle, was in good preservation, and it is believed had been picked up by the tree at an early period of its existence and encircled with the growth.

BEE STING KILLS HOG

An ordinary honey bee killed a pig belonging to William Gibson, near Quinome, Kan., one evening. The animal attracted the attention of its owners by squealing furiously and continuously. When they arrived at the pen they saw the porker beating its snout against the ground. Before they could find out what ailed the animal, it rolled over and died. Post-mortem investigation revealed a honey bee clamped under the pig's jaw with its stinger injected into the animal's throat.

RECOVERS USE OF HER ARM BY FAITH HEALER'S PRAYER

Following a forty-minute prayer with James Moore Hickson, a faith healer of Lexington, Ky., Mrs. Foxhall A. Daingerfield, seventy-six years old, widow of the famous turfman, and mother of Algernon Daingerfield, Secretary of the New York Jockey Club, discovered that she could use her left arm, which she has not lifted for years on account of neuritis. Mrs. Daingerfield also dressed her own hair for the first time in years.

FREAK CALF

J. L. McNutt, rancher, living near Hugo, Col., has visions of a young fortune to be made from a freak calf that is drawing scores of visitors from Eastern Colorado to his farm. The calf, of pure Hereford breeding, is ten months old and weighs 250 pounds, but stands only 21 inches high. It has a normal head and perfect markings, but stopped growing when it was seven months old. Its legs are 7 inches in length. Already McNutt has had several lucrative offers to exhibit the calf in circus sideshows.

MADE RESTITUTION

Superintendent of Schools Ella Flagg Young, of Chicago, received \$1 within a letter written in a cramped schoolboy hand. It read: "Dear Sir—About six years ago I stole about two bushel baskets of coal from the school

at Warren avenue and Wood street, and you will find inclosed in letter \$1, which is more than the value of what I took, and the priest tells us in confession that God won't forgive us if we don't return stolen goods or the value of them. Yours, The Penitent." The dollar will be put in the coal fund for the school at Warren avenue and Wood street.

WHY DO MY TEETH CHATTER?

Your teeth chatter because when you are cold in a way that makes your teeth chatter the little muscles which close the jaw act in a series of quick little contractions which pull the jaw up, and then let it fall by its own weight. This is repeated many times and, as the action is quick, the chattering occurs. It is a peculiar thing that this occurs in spite of the will of the brain, when, as a matter of fact, these muscles which operate the jaws are especially under the control of the brain. The chattering is really a spasm caused by the cold, and all spasms act independent of the will. Cold seems to act on the jaw muscles a good deal like some poisons which cause spasms.—Book of Wonders.

NEW WEATHER SERVICE

The Highway Weather Service is one of the most popular recent undertakings of the U. S. Weather Bureau. As now developed, certain stations of the Bureau receive reports of the conditions of the roads in the surrounding region or over certain main highways and publish the same in their bulletins or in the press. The current annual report of the Bureau announces that the service was in operation last winter (1918-19) at 15 stations in 11 states, but except at four of these stations it was a winter service only and was discontinued in the spring. This service is so valuable to motorists and others that it will doubtless be extended as rapidly as the funds available for the purpose admit, but these are very limited at present.

"MENTAL MURDER"

A man is to be tried at Evansville, Ind., on the rare charge of "mental murder," it was announced by Earl Fowler, Commonwealth Attorney of Union County. The defendant is Robert Millstead, alias Thomas Logan, a paroled convict, who is said to have served time in an Ohio penitentiary. The man is alleged to have driven to death, with fear as a weapon, Robert Morehead, a prominent Union County farmer, who committed suicide on December 7. The specific charge against Millstead is accomplice before the fact.

Attorney Fowler says he will seek to prove that Millstead impersonated a Federal officer, causing Morehead to choose between death and disgrace which would come from the exposure of some deed of his of which Millstead had knowledge. Morehead made known that he would rather die than have his family disgraced. The case is the first of its kind ever reported in this section of the country and is attracting wide attention.

CARRIED PATIENT 300 MILES

Dr. Corbett of Ottawa, attached to the expedition of H. F. Blake, Ungava explorer, was receiving medical treatment in Quebec, May 10, for a gunshot wound received 160 miles from civilization.

On arriving here with Dr. Corbett, Mr. Blake told of hardships endured in bringing the wounded man to this city. Dr. Corbett was accidentally shot in the abdomen while 350 miles north of Quebec, as he was lifting his shotgun from the bottom of a canoe. Blake and some other members of his party started back with the wounded man, dragging him at times on a toboggan over the ice, carrying him on a stretcher for miles, and making the rest of the trip back to civilization by canoe.

One canoe upset and the occupants were rescued with difficulty. Provisions and outfit were lost and the party traveled for two days without food. Finally, eleven miles from the nearest house, with the rest of the party exhausted, two members pressed on and reached the little settlement of Riviere-a-Dore, from which a rescue party was dispatched.

MISERS' FORTUNES

Thomas Cooke, known as "the Islington miser," who lived a life of penury, saving and petty trickery in Islington, a borough of London, England, left a fortune of more than \$300,000 for his heirs to squabble over after his death. Cooke managed to get his meals free of cost by the old and yet ever new trick of falling in a pretended fit in front of a house at dinner time. He would be carried into a house and then, on making his usual quick recovery, he naturally would be asked to share the meal.

Among other beggars who left fortunes after their death was Jeremiah Monihan, upon whom, when he was about to be buried in St. Louis, was found a key to a safety deposit box. The safety box contained \$60,000 in perfectly good interest bearing bonds. Another, Marshall McMullan, a ragged recluse, was found in a starving condition in his tumbledown shack on the outskirts of Evansville, Ind. He was taken before a commission for examination as to his sanity, and when he was searched, \$22,000 was found in the lining of his coat and in his pockets.

NEW WIRELESS DEVICE

A totally deaf man could be a wireless receiving operator in a station equipped with the latest of radio inventions—a photographic device which kodaks the dots and dashes onto a tape, similar to the kind used in a broker's ticker instrument.

This is but a minute advantage of the apparatus invented by Charles A. Hoxie, General Electric engineer. Its principal features are that messages may be received and accurately recorded up to a speed of 600 words per minute and the tape affords a permanent record.

The machine has been thoroughly tested at the Government wireless station at Otter Cliff, near Bar Harbor, Maine, and the results have been most successful.

Because of the very delicate tuning that can be obtained and the resulting high degree of "selectivity," it has been found practical to receive messages despite outside noises, which under ordinary conditions have rendered reception impossible. Although the instrument is not immune from the effects of "static streaks," it has recorded successfully messages at a high speed regardless

of strong static interference that without its aid would have baffled the receiving operator.

It is stated that messages have been deciphered with the assistance of this machine when operators were unable to get a single word by ear.

The photographic receiver and its permanent record are a guard against error, for the visual record is a message in dots and dashes which distinctly shows to the eye what was received and is not left to the operator's sense of hearing.

This machine frequently has received messages at the rate of forty words per minute, as fast as a machine gun shoots, and in special tests by Mr. Hoxie the machine recorded a low power pressure message at 600 words a minute. It might also be mentioned that at this speed messages would be secret except to stations equipped with this machine, for no human being would be able to record at this remarkable rate.

A commercial advantage of this machine, other than those already mentioned, is that it will allow a greater number of messages to be sent during the period of the day when atmospheric conditions are best suited for wireless. This is between 4 and 10 o'clock in the morning.

When it is remembered that a wireless station powerful enough to send messages across the ocean costs approximately \$2,000,000, the item of keeping down overhead expense by rapid sending and receiving can be appreciated.

The average words per minute to be received by wireless is now twenty. In rare cases it has reached thirty-five. Now comes a machine which increases the speed thirty times.

The mechanism is based on a comparatively simple electrical engineering principle. A light weight mirror "flutters" in electro-magnetic tune with the minute electric impulses coming from the receiving antennae. The duration and extent of the mirror's oscillations vary according to the dot, dash or silence of the sending station.

This mirror reflects a beam of light on the moving sensitized tape. The tape, propelled by an electric motor, progresses up and down through pipes which contain the developing and fixing chemicals.

Automatically, the tape enters the developing fluid and then the hypo-fixing bath; then it is washed in running water, and is dried by electric heat, assisted by a forced draft, all invisibly effected inside the single machine.

Like the tape from a stock broker's machine, the message pours out of the device into a basket. There is an average of one word to every inch of tape. The receiving operator can read this message at the rate of fifty or a hundred words per minute.

The time to record, develop, fix, wash and dry the tape is from two to four minutes. The rolls of tape are 1,000 feet long and a continuous message of 10,000 words can be recorded without reloading the machine.

In speaking of his wonderful device, Mr. Hoxie said:

"Recently, two messages from different sources were coming into the receiving circuit connected with the photographic record. One of these messages was sent at a frequency of 1,000 cycles per second and the other at 975 cycles per second. Ordinarily two frequencies so close together would have interfered with reception, but I was pleased to see no trouble in receiving them with my machine.

"I hope to perfect the instrument so that in the near future several photographic recorders can be attached to a single antennae and simultaneously receive and record messages from several directions.

THE BANJO AT THE POLE

One can scarcely imagine a greater contrast than playing a banjo in a crowded meeting in the heart of London, and giving a performance in the icy atmosphere of the Arctic regions. At the hundredth lecture given by Sir Ernest Shackleton, when he told the thrilling story of his last polar expedition, he introduced some of his old colleagues, and insisted on the production of the old banjo which played so great a part in keeping up the spirits of the men who were marooned on Elephant Island for a dreary four and a half months. At an informal gathering after the lecture, some of the old songs were sung and specimens given of the impromptu ditties that helped to pass away the time and amuse the men the tale of whose fortitude and patience is being listened to by thousands of people from the cushioned seats of the Philharmonic Hall in London. Sir Ernest Shackleton tells his adventure in simple homely language, with a sense of humor that is a relief to the thrilling story. The penguins, in the pictures, all unconscious of their London audience, behave in their usual amusing way, familiar to stay-at-home people, who love to roam the world by the help of more adventurous spirits.

FACTS ABOUT THE OTTER

The otter seems to be near-cousin to the seal, although the dentition is of a peculiar form. The otter is distinguished by the breadth and flatness of the head and the rounded outline of the muzzle, the lips being large and fleshy and furnished with whiskers, which are communicators of feeling; the ears very small and set close to the head, and the eyes, of moderate size, are provided with a nictitating membrane as a defense to their surface.

The otter's tail is an important instrument, as it uses it in swimming as a rudder, enabling the animal to turn abruptly or make many swift maneuvers in chase of its finny prey. The beaver is like the otter in this detail.

On land the otter is hampered in its movements, as its limbs are short and stout and the body long and flattened; the toes on its feet are webbed instead of spreading open, consequently the animal is more at home in the water. The fur is close and woolly and glossy, making it most desirable for garments of various styles.

The otter is not confined to any one section of the globe, but may be found in various countries. It dwells in caverns or hollows near the water, and seeks its prey mainly at night. It is sly and a recluse among animals and lurks by day in deep burrows or in crevices of rocks.

Eight or ten moderate sized fish constitute a meal for the otter, but it is a well-known fact that it kills a much larger number of fish than it can eat; therefore one can form an idea of the slaughter the animal performs. It is said that when fish are scarce the otter will dare to steal from farms. It is known that sucking pigs, young lambs and poultry have been killed and carried away by the nocturnal robbers.

It is mainly during the summer months, when the otter has a brood of young to feed, that she kills many more fish than she can use. The track they leave in the soft mud, as they trail their prey, is witness to the extent of their fishing activities.

The otter is very intelligent, and when caught young will become readily tamed and companionable to humans. It is taught to drive fish into nets, to catch salmon and assist fishermen in many ways. In using the otter to drive the shoals of fish into nets the animal is tethered

by a long rope to bamboo poles driven in the mud near the water's edge.

Fish are afraid of the otter, and will not spawn anywhere where the slightest signs of the otter are to be found. Thus an otter is a menace to fisheries, and one should be watchful that no such animal hovers within the ken of the fish.

MIRRORS USED FOR FRAUD

There are mirrors that are totally unlike those found on milady's dressing case, and not as harmless, either. While they are interesting and amusing at times they are sometimes made use of by swindlers to take the dollars from unsuspecting and credulous mortals. They are known as magic mirrors, and a good deal of ingenuity is expended in their manufacture. They are sold to credulous individuals for \$5 and \$10, and cost one-tenth those figures. Some of these charlatans, with sublime assurance, have called the law to their aid to protect them from rivals, or it may be to add prestige to their merchandise, as several of the mirrors are, or claim to be, covered by letters patent, copyright or trade marks.

The mirror makers can justify their calling with precedents numberless. The belief that a bit of bright metal or glass could be so charged by the black art that it would reflect in visible form the invisible things or beings about us is as old as civilization. Egypt and Babylon, Persia and India, Japan and China have made and used these occult instruments from early times. Those which are made in the far East possess qualities which at one time were puzzling, but which, when the secret was discovered, were found ingenious utilizations of optical laws.

The simplest is the Japanese lucky mirror, a fair model of which the writer saw in a Broadway shop a couple of days ago. This is a flat plate and handle made of a metal resembling steel. One side is so highly burnished that it reflects as well as the best silver-backed looking glass. The reverse is chased in low relief with figures of vines, birds, clouds and ideographs or talismans. When employed in the usual fashion it does not differ from any ordinary mirror, but when a large beam of light is thrown upon it and reflected upon a dark wall or ceiling, in the reflected circle appears a luminous face, ideograph or other figure. The result is secured in the original welding or casting of the mirror, when a piece of metal of different composition, shaped like the figure it is to produce, is fused into the circumjacent mass.

A similar effect is produced in silvered mirrors by just laying on the reflecting character one kind of tin foil and filling in the rest of the surface with a foil of the same appearance, but different reflecting quality. Akin to this style of work are the magic lacquers which at certain oblique angles disclose figures and lines, which are invisible when looked upon at right angles to the lacquer's surface. Oldest of the oriental mirrors are those set at the bottom of a cylinder or truncated cone, whose surface is waved or undulating. The base reflects in ordinary manner, the sides in such a fashion as to produce foci of focal circles at various points. From one point of view the looker sees a faint halo about his face at the bottom of the cylinder; from a second point a misty human face alongside of his own; from a third a face looking at him through his reflected eyes.

The principle which underlies these odd images is the same as that used by Cook and Maskelyne in London in producing their "ghosts," and seems to have been employed with great skill by Cagliostro in the eighteenth century.

HELGOLAND FORTRESS BEING DISMANTLED

Helgoland, which until two years ago was Germany's practically impregnable fortress, the defensive strength of which was so great that the Allies decided that it was useless to attack it, is now so far dismantled as to be of no military value, according to a press dispatch from Berlin. The work of dismantling has been going on for more than one year, but German army engineers who constructed the fortress declare that it cannot be completely "demobilized" in less than seven years. All the guns have been dismounted, but the gun emplacements remain as well as the harbor works and part of the fortifications. The stronghold was built at a cost of \$175,000,000, but its guns were fired only once during the World War, which was when the British warship *Shannon* was the target. Every part of the defenses was worked by hydraulic power. The water necessary for the defense of the fortress and for sanitary purposes was drawn by huge pumps from fifty feet below sea level. While the Germans believed the secret of the plan of fortifications was unknown to others than their government, it is now said that a British naval officer, who passed as an American naval officer, visited all the fortifications in 1913.

A FORTUNE TELLER'S TRICK

August Bilka, a restaurant chef, of Chicago, had saved about \$1,000, but he was ambitious to get rich quickly. One day, while walking in South State street, he espied in front of a poolroom at No. 514 the sign of a gypsy fortune teller. Among other things which the seer advertised was her ability to increase one's bankroll.

August looked up and down the street and then darted in. He told the fortune teller he wanted her scheme of getting rich. She led him through a course of questions that revealed he had saved \$1,000. In order to increase his wealth the fortune teller told him he must get a \$500 bill and pin it to his undershirt over his heart. After four days he was to return to the clairvoyant's "parlors" for further instructions.

August went to the bank and withdrew \$500 in a bill of that denomination. He hastened to his room and pinned the bill according to the seer's directions. On the fourth day he again visited the gypsy queen. He partly disrobed to show that the bill was pinned over his heart. She said the charm was working "beautifully," but it would be necessary for the queen herself to wear the bill next her heart for a day and a night if August were to get his "wish." She promised him that inside of three weeks he would be worth \$10,000.

August took the bill from his undershirt and gave it to the queen. He was to call the next afternoon.

He called. There was nobody home, and August told his troubles to the police. But he is still "out" the \$500.

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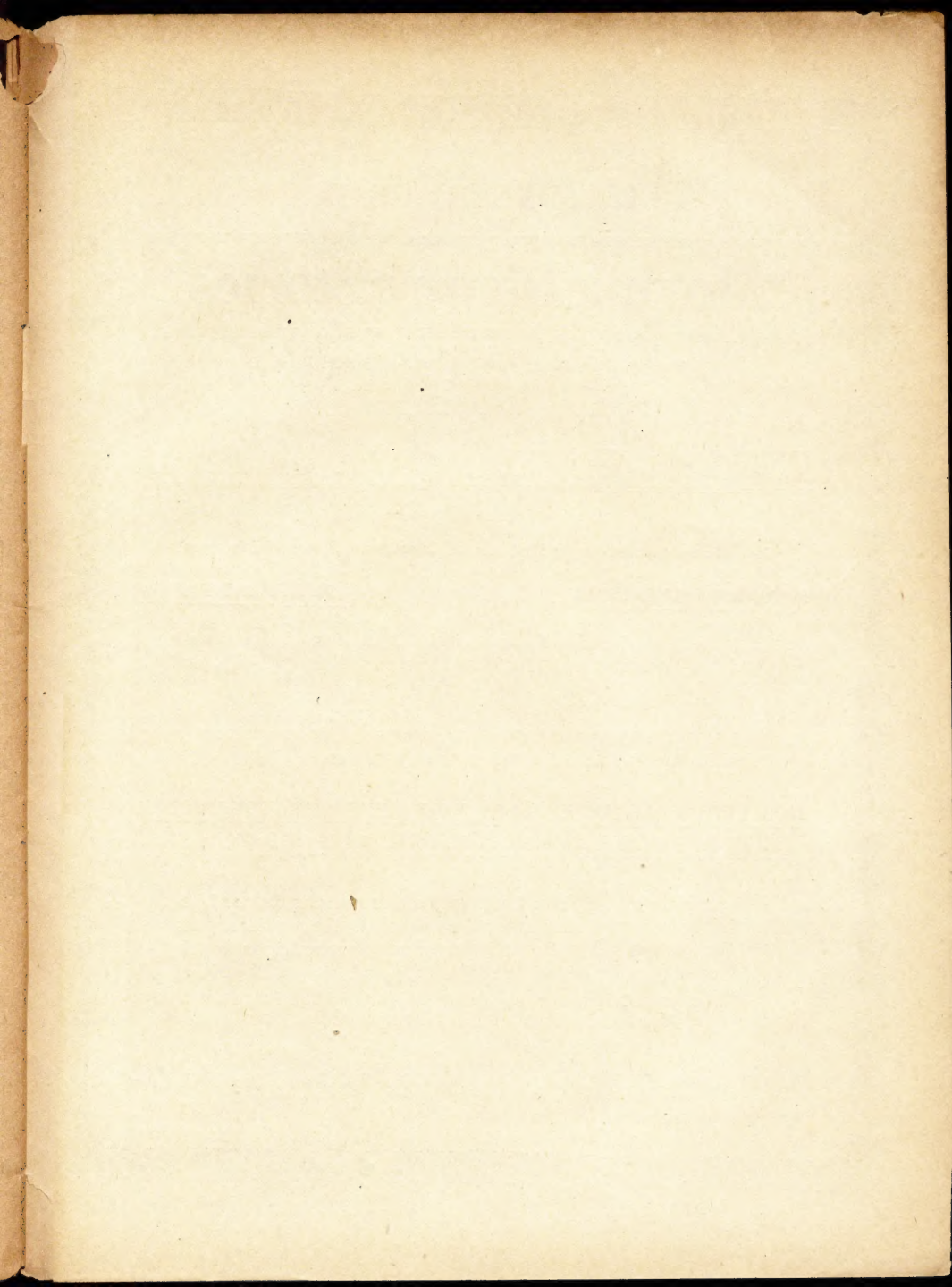
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